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H. DE BALZAC

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Edited by

GEORGE SAINTSBURY

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H. DE BALZAC

ABOUT CATHERINE DE' MEDICI

(*Sur Catherine de Médicis*)

AND

PIERRETTE

AND

THE ABBÉ BIROTTEAU

(*Le Curé de Tours*)

Translated by

CLARA BELL

with Prefaces by

GEORGE SAINTSBURY

LONDON

J. M. DENT & COMPANY

'I am Chaudieu!'
Drawn and Etched by D. Murray Smith

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CONTENTS

PART I

ABOUT CATHERINE DE' MEDICI

PAGE

PREFACE ix

ABOUT CATHERINE DE' MEDICI—

INTRODUCTION 3

PART I. THE CALVINIST MARTYR . . 47

„ II. THE RUGGIERI'S SECRET . . 250

„ III. THE TWO DREAMS . . . 332

PART II

PIERRETTE AND THE ABBÉ BIROTTEAU

(Le Curé de Tours)

PAGE

PIERRETTE 1

THE ABBÉ BIROTTEAU 162

LIST OF ETCHINGS

PART I

'I AM CHAUDIEU!' . . . . *Frontispiece*

PAGE

CHRISTOPHE IN PRISON 145

'YOU, MADAM, HAVE KILLED YOUR SON!' SAID MARY STEWART 201

'YOU ARE A LOYAL SUBJECT,' SAID CATHERINE . . 248

Drawn and Etched by D. Murray Smith.

PART II

PIERRETTE AND HE . . . HAD SKETCHED THEIR CHILDISH DREAMS ON THE VEIL OF THE FUTURE . . 53

'I HAVE BROUGHT YOU A COUSIN OF YOURS, AND HERE SHE BE' 54

BATHILDE . . . PUT HER PRETTY FOOT ON THE BAR OF THE FENDER, ... 109

HE RANG AGAIN, A VERY SIGNIFICANT PEAL . . 229

Drawn and Etched by W. Boucher.

ABOUT CATHERINE DE' MEDICI

PREFACE

THIS book (as to which it is important to remember the *Sur* if injustice is not to be done to the intentions of the author) has plenty of interest of more kinds than one; but it is perhaps more interesting because of the place it holds in Balzac's work than for itself. He had always considerable hankerings after the historical novel: his early and lifelong devotion to Scott would sufficiently account for that. More than one of the *Œuvres de Jeunesse* attempts the form in a more or less conscious way: the *Chouans*, the first successful book, definitely attempts it; but by far the most ambitious attempt is to be found in the book before us. It is most probable that it was of this, if of anything of his own, that Balzac was thinking when, in 1846, he wrote disdainfully to Madame Hanska about Dumas, and expressed himself towards *Les Trois Mousquetaires* (which had whiled him through a day of cold and inability to work) nearly as ungratefully as Carlyle did towards Captain Marryat. And though it is, let it be repeated, a mistake, and a rather unfair mistake, to give such a title to the book as might induce readers to regard it as a single and definite novel, of which Catherine is the heroine, though it is

(this is the test which he would himself, beyond all question, have accepted) a long way above Dumas and near Scott?

I must say that I can see no possibility of answer except, 'Certainly not.' For the historical novel depends almost more than any other division of the kind upon interest of story. Interest of story is not, as has been several times pointed out, at any time Balzac's main appeal, and he has succeeded in it here less than in most other places. He has discussed too much; he has brought in too many personages without sufficient interest of plot; but, above all, he exhibits throughout an incapacity to handle his materials in the peculiar way required. How long he was before he grasped 'the way to do it,' even on his own special lines, is the commonplace and refrain of all writing about him. Now, to this special kind he gave comparatively little attention, and the result is that he mastered it less than any other. In the best stories of Dumas (and the best number some fifteen or twenty at least) the interest of narrative, of adventure, of what will happen to the personages, takes you by the throat at once, and never lets you go till the end. There is little or nothing of this sort here. The three stories are excellently well-informed studies, very curious and interesting in divers ways. The *Ruggieri* is perhaps something more; but it is, as its author no doubt honestly entitled it, much more an *Étude Philosophique* than an historical novelette. In short, this was not Balzac's way. We need not be sorry—it is very rarely necessary to be that—that he tried it; we may easily forgive him for not recognising the ease and certainty with which Dumas trod the path. But we

should be most of all thankful that he did not himself enter it frequently, or ever pursue it far.

The most important part of the bibliography of the book has been given above. The rest is a little complicated, and for its ins and outs reference must be made to the usual authority. It should be enough to say that the *Martyr*, under the title of *Les Lecamus*, first appeared in the *Siècle* during the spring of 1841. Sovverain published it as a book two years later with the other two, as *Catherine de Medicis Expliquée*. The second part, entitled, not *La Confidence*, but *Le Secret des Ruggieri*, had appeared much earlier in the *Chronique de Paris* during the winter of 1836-37, and had been published as a book in the latter year; it was joined to *Catherine de Medicis Expliquée* as above. The third part, after appearing in the *Monde* as early as May 1830, also appeared in the *Deux Mondes* for December of the same year, then became one of the *Romans et Contes Philosophiques*, then an *Étude Philosophique*, and in 1843 joined *Catherine de Medicis Expliquée*. The whole was inserted in the *Comédie* in 1846.

G. S.

believe it to be the Isère; Cochard, a learned man of Lyons, identifies it with the Drôme. But to any one who has eyes, are there not striking geographical and linguistic affinities between Scoras and Scrivia, to say nothing of the almost certain fact that the Carthaginian fleet lay at la Spezzia or in the Gulf of Genoa?

I could understand all this patient research if the battle of Cannae could be doubted; but since its consequences are well known, what is the use of blackening so much paper with theories that are but the Arabesque of hypothesis, so to speak; while the most important history of later times, that of the Reformation, is so full of obscurities that the name remains unknown of the man[1] *who was making a boat move by steam at Barcelona at the time when Luther and Calvin were inventing the revolt of mind?*

We, I believe, after having made, each in his own way, the same investigations as to the great and noble character of Catherine de' Medici, have come to the same opinion. So I thought that my historical studies on the subject might be suitably dedicated to a writer who has laboured so long on the history of the Reformation; and that I should thus do public homage, precious perhaps for its rarity, to the character and fidelity of a man true to the Monarchy.

PARIS, *January* 1842.

[1] The inventor of this experiment was probably Salomon of Caux, not of Caus. This great man was always unlucky; after his death even his name was misspelt. Salomon, whose original portrait, at the age of forty-six, was discovered by the author of the *Human Comedy*, was born at Caux, in Normandy.

INTRODUCTION

When men of learning are struck by a historical blunder, and try to correct it, 'Paradox!' is generally the cry; but to those who thoroughly examine the history of modern times, it is evident that historians are privileged liars, who lend their pen to popular beliefs, exactly as most of the newspapers of the day express nothing but the opinions of their readers.

Historical independence of thought has been far less conspicuous among lay writers than among the priesthood. The purest light thrown on history has come from the Benedictines, one of the glories of France—so long, that is to say, as the interests of the monastic orders are not in question. Since the middle of the eighteenth century, some great and learned controversialists have arisen who, struck by the need for rectifying certain popular errors to which historians have lent credit, have published some remarkable works. Thus Monsieur Launoy, nicknamed the Evicter of Saints, made ruthless war on certain saints who have sneaked into the Church Calendar. Thus the rivals of the Benedictines, the too little known members of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres, began their *mémoires*, their studious notes, full of patience, erudition, and logic, on certain obscure passages of history. Thus Voltaire, with an unfortunate bias, and sadly perverted passions, often brought the light of his intellect to bear on historical prejudices. Diderot, with this end in view, began a book—much too long—on a period of the history of Imperial Rome. But for the French Revolution, criticism, as applied to history, might perhaps have laid up the materials for a good and true

history of France, for which evidence had long been amassed by the great French Benedictines. Louis XVI., a man of clear mind, himself translated the English work, which so much agitated the last century, in which Walpole tried to explain the career of Richard III.

How is it that persons so famous as kings and queens, so important as generals of great armies, become objects of aversion or derision? Half the world hesitates between the song on Marlborough and the history of England, as they do between popular tradition and history as concerning Charles IX.

At all periods when great battles are fought between the masses and the authorities, the populace creates an *ogresque* figure—to coin a word for the sake of its exactitude. Thus in our own time, but for the *Memorials of Saint-Helena*, and the controversies of Royalists and Bonapartists, there was scarcely a chance but that Napoleon would have been misunderstood. Another Abbé de Pradt or two, a few more newspaper articles, and Napoleon from an Emperor would have become an Ogre.

How is error propagated and accredited? The mystery is accomplished under our eyes without our discerning the process. No one suspects how greatly printing has helped to give body both to the envy which attends persons in high places, and to the popular irony which sums up the converse view of every great historical fact. For instance, every bad horse in France that needs flogging is called after the Prince de Polignac; and so who knows what opinion the future may hold as to the Prince de Polignac's *coup d'Etat*? In consequence of a caprice of Shakespeare's—a stroke of revenge perhaps, like that of Beaumarchais on Bergasse (Begearss)—Falstaff, in England, is a type of the grotesque; his name raises a laugh, he is the King of Buffoons. Now, instead of being enormously fat, ridiculously amorous, vain, old, drunken, and a corrupter of youth, Falstaff was one of the most important figures of his time, a Knight

of the Garter, holding high command. At the date of Henry v.'s accession, Falstaff was at most four-and-thirty. This General, who distinguished himself at the battle of Agincourt, where he took the Duc d'Alençon prisoner, in 1420 took the town of Montereau, which was stoutly defended. Finally, under Henry vi., he beat ten thousand Frenchmen with fifteen hundred men who were dropping with fatigue and hunger. So much for valour!

If we turn to literature, Rabelais, among the French, a sober man who drank nothing but water, is thought of as a lover of good cheer and a persistent sot. Hundreds of absurd stories have been coined concerning the author of one of the finest books in French literature, *Pantagruel.*

Aretino, Titian's friend, and the Voltaire of his day, is now credited with a reputation, in complete antagonism with his works and character, which he acquired by his over free wit, characteristic of the writings of an age when gross jests were held in honour, and queens and cardinals indited tales which are now considered licentious. Instances might be infinitely multiplied.

In France, and at the most important period of our history, Catherine de' Medici has suffered more from popular error than any other woman, unless it be Brunehaut or Frédégonde; while Marie de' Medici, whose every action was prejudicial to France, has escaped the disgrace that should cover her name. Marie dissipated the treasure amassed by Henri iv.; she never purged herself of the suspicion that she was cognisant of his murder; Epernon, who had long known Ravaillac, and who did not parry his blow, was *intimate* with the Queen; she compelled her son to banish her from France, where she was fostering the rebellion of her other son, Gaston; and Richelieu's triumph over her on the *Journée des Dupes* was due solely to the Cardinal's revealing to Louis xiii. certain documents secreted after the death of Henry iv.

Catherine de' Medici, on the contrary, saved the throne

of France, she maintained the Royal authority under circumstances to which more than one great prince would have succumbed. Face to face with such leaders of the factions and ambitions of the houses of Guise and of Bourbon as the two Cardinals de Lorraine and the two 'Balafrés,' the two Princes de Condé, Queen Jeanne d'Albret, Henri IV., the Connétable de Montmorency, Calvin, the Colignys, and Théodore de Bèze, she was forced to put forth the rarest fine qualities, the most essential gifts of statesmanship, under the fire of the Calvinist press. These, at any rate, are indisputable facts. And to the student who digs deep into the history of the sixteenth century in France, the figure of Catherine de' Medici stands out as that of a great king.

When once calumnies are undermined by facts laboriously brought to light from under the contradictions of pamphlets and false anecdotes, everything is explained to the glory of this wonderful woman, who had none of the weakness of her sex, who lived chaste in the midst of the gallantries of the most licentious Court in Europe, and who, notwithstanding her lack of money, erected noble buildings, as if to make good the losses caused by the destructive Calvinists, who injured Art as deeply as they did the body politic.

Hemmed in between a race of princes who proclaimed themselves the heirs of Charlemagne, and a factious younger branch that was eager to bury the Connétable de Bourbon's treason under the throne; obliged, too, to fight down a heresy on the verge of devouring the Monarchy, without friends, and aware of treachery in the chiefs of the Catholic party and of republicanism in the Calvinists, Catherine used the most dangerous but the surest of political weapons—Craft. She determined to deceive by turns the party that was anxious to secure the downfall of the House of Valois, the Bourbons who aimed at the Crown, and the Reformers—the Radicals of that day, who dreamed of an impossible republic, like

those of our own day, who, however, have nothing to reform. Indeed, so long as she lived, the Valois sat on the throne. The great de Thou understood the worth of this woman when he exclaimed, on hearing of her death—

'It is not a woman, it is Royalty that dies in her!'

Catherine had, in fact, the sense of Royalty in the highest degree, and she defended it with admirable courage and persistency. The reproaches flung at her by Calvinist writers are indeed her glory; she earned them solely by her triumphs. And how was she to triumph but by cunning? Here lies the whole question.

As to violence—that method bears on one of the most hotly disputed points of policy, which, in recent days, has been answered here, on the spot where a big stone from Egypt has been placed to wipe out the memory of regicide, and to stand as an emblem of the materialistic policy which now rules us; it was answered at les Carmes and at the Abbaye; it was answered on the steps of Saint Roch; it was answered in front of the Louvre in 1830, and again by the people against the King, as it has since been answered once more by la Fayette's 'best of all republics' against the republican rebellion, at Saint-Merri and the Rue Transnonnain.

Every power, whether legitimate or illegitimate, must defend itself when it is attacked; but, strange to say, while the people is heroic when it triumphs over the nobility, the authorities are murderers when they oppose the people! And, finally, if after their appeal to force they succumb, they are regarded as effete idiots. The present Government (1840) will try to save itself, by two laws, from the same evil as attacked Charles x., and which he tried to scotch by two decrees. Is not this a bitter mockery? May those in power meet cunning with cunning? Ought they to kill those who try to kill them?

The massacres of the Revolution are the reply to the massacre of Saint-Bartholomew. The People, being

King, did by the nobility and the King as the King and the nobility did by the rebels in the sixteenth century. And popular writers, who know full well that, under similar conditions, the people would do the same again, are inexcusable when they blame Catherine de' Medici and Charles IX.

'All power is a permanent conspiracy,' said Casimir Périer, when teaching what power ought to be. We admire the anti-social maxims published by audacious writers; why, then, are social truths received in France with such disfavour when they are boldly stated? This question alone sufficiently accounts for historical mistakes. Apply the solution of this problem to the devastating doctrines which flatter popular passion, and to the conservative doctrines which would repress the ferocious or foolish attempts of the populace, and you will see the reason why certain personages are popular or unpopular. Laubardemont and Laffemas, like some people now living, were devoted to the maintenance of the power they believed in. Soldiers and judges, they obeyed a Royal authority. D'Orthez, in our day, would be discharged from office for misinterpreting orders from the Ministry, but Charles X. left him to govern his province. The power of the masses is accountable to no one; the power of one is obliged to account to its subjects, great and small alike.

Catherine, like Philip II. and the Duke of Alva, like the Guises and Cardinal Granvelle, foresaw the future to which the Reformation was dooming Europe. They saw monarchies, religion, and power all overthrown. Catherine, from the Cabinet of the French kings, forthwith issued sentence of death on that inquiring spirit which threatened modern society—a sentence which Louis XIV. finally carried out. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes was a measure that proved unfortunate, simply in consequence of the irritation Louis XIV. had aroused in Europe. At any other time England, Holland,

and the German Empire would not have encouraged on their territory French exiles and French rebels.

Why, in these days, refuse to recognise the greatness which the majestic adversary of that most barren heresy derived from the struggle itself? Calvinists have written strongly against Charles IX.'s stratagems; but travel through France: as you see the ruins of so many fine churches destroyed, and consider the vast breaches made by religious fanatics in the social body; when you learn the revenges they took, while deploring the mischief of individualism—the plague of France to-day, of which the germ lay in the questions of liberty of conscience which they stirred up—you will ask yourself on which side were the barbarians. There are always, as Catherine says in the third part of this Study, 'unluckily, in all ages, hypocritical writers ready to bewail two hundred scoundrels killed in due season.' Cæsar, who tried to incite the Senate to pity for Catiline's party, would very likely have conquered Cicero if he had had newspapers and an Opposition at his service.

Another consideration accounts for Catherine's historical and popular disfavour. In France the Opposition has always been Protestant, because its policy has never been anything but negative; it has inherited the theories of the Lutherans, the Calvinists, and the Protestants on the terrible texts of liberty, tolerance, progress, and philanthropy. The opponents of power spent two centuries in establishing the very doubtful doctrine of freewill. Two more were spent in working out the first corollary of freewill—liberty of conscience. Our age is striving to prove the second—political liberty.

Standing between the fields already traversed and the fields as yet untrodden, Catherine and the Church proclaimed the salutary principle of modern communities, *Una fides, unus Dominus*, but asserting their right of life and death over all innovators. Even if she had been conquered, succeeding times have shown that Catherine was

right. The outcome of freewill, religious liberty, and political liberty (note, this does not mean *civil* liberty) is France as we now see it.

And what is France in 1840? A country exclusively absorbed in material interests, devoid of patriotism, devoid of conscience; where authority is powerless; where electoral rights, the fruit of freewill and political liberty, raise none but mediocrities; where brute force is necessary to oppose the violence of the populace; where discussion, brought to bear on the smallest matter, checks every action of the body politic; and where individualism—the odious result of the indefinite subdivision of property, which destroys family cohesion—will devour everything, even the nation, which sheer selfishness will some day lay open to invasion. Men will say, 'Why not the Tzar?' as they now say, 'Why not the Duc d'Orléans?' We do not care for many things even now; fifty years hence we shall care for nothing.

Therefore, according to Catherine—and according to all who wish to see Society soundly organised—man as a social unit, as a subject, has no freewill, has no right to accept the dogma of liberty of conscience, or to have political liberty. Still, as no community can subsist without some guarantee given to the subject against the sovereign, the subject derives from that certain liberties under restrictions. Liberty—no, but liberties—yes; well defined and circumscribed liberties. This is in the nature of things. For instance it is beyond human power to fetter freedom of thought; and no sovereign may ever tamper with money.

The great politicians who have failed in this long contest—it has gone on for five centuries—have allowed their subjects wide liberties; but they never recognise their liberty to publish anti-social opinions, nor the unlimited freedom of the subject. To them the words *subject* and *free* are, politically speaking, a contradiction in terms; and, in the same way, the statement that all

citizens are equal is pure nonsense, and contradicted by Nature every hour. To acknowledge the need for religion, the need for authority, and at the same time to leave all men at liberty to deny religion, to attack its services, to oppose the exercise of authority by the public and published expression of opinion, is an impossibility such as the Catholics of the sixteenth century would have nothing to say to. Alas! the triumph of Calvinism will cost France more yet than it has ever done; for the sects of to-day—religious, political, humanitarian, and levelling—are the train of Calvinism; and when we see the blunders of those in power, their contempt for intelligence, their devotion to those material interests in which they seek support, and which are the most delusive of all props, unless by the special aid of Providence the genius of destruction must certainly win the day from the genius of conservatism. The attacking forces, who have nothing to lose, and everything to win, are thoroughly in agreement; whereas their wealthy opponents refuse to make any sacrifice of money or of self-conceit to secure defenders.

Printing came to the aid of the resistance inaugurated by the Vaudois and the Albigenses. As soon as human thought—no longer condensed, as it had necessarily been in order to preserve the most communicable form—had assumed a multitude of garbs and become the very people, instead of remaining in some sense divinely axiomatic, there were two vast armies to contend with—that of ideas and that of men. Royal power perished in the struggle, and we, in France, at this day are looking on at its last coalition with elements which make it difficult, not to say impossible.

Power is action; the electoral principle is discussion. No political action is possible when discussion is permanently established. So we ought to regard the woman as truly great who foresaw that future, and fought it so bravely. The House of Bourbon was able to succeed to

the House of Valois, and owed it to Catherine de' Medici that it found that crown to wear. If the second Balafré had been alive, it is very doubtful that the Béarnais, strong as he was, could have seized the throne, seeing how dearly it was sold by the Duc de Mayenne and the remnant of the Guise faction. The necessary steps taken by Catherine, who had the deaths of François II. and Charles IX. on her soul—both dying opportunely for her safety—are not, it must be noted, what the Calvinist and modern writers blame her for! Though there was no poisoning, as some serious authors have asserted, there were other not less criminal plots. It is beyond question that she hindered Paré from saving one, and murdered the other morally by inches.

But the swift death of François II. and the skilfully contrived end of Charles IX. did no injury to Calvinist interests. The causes of these two events concerned only the uppermost sphere, and were never suspected by writers or by the lower orders at the time; they were guessed only by de Thou, by l'Hôpital, by men of the highest talents, or the chiefs of the two parties who coveted and clung to the Crown, and who thought such means indispensable.

Popular songs, strange to say, fell foul of Catherine's morality. The anecdote is known of a soldier who was roasting a goose in the guardroom of the Château of Tours while Catherine and Henri IV. were holding a conference there, and who sang a ballad in which the Queen was insultingly compared to the largest cannon in the hands of the Calvinists. Henri IV. drew his sword to go out and kill the man; Catherine stopped him, and only shouted out—

'It is Catherine who provides the goose!'

Though the executions at Amboise were attributed to Catherine, and the Calvinists made that able woman responsible for all the inevitable disasters of the struggle, she must be judged by posterity, like Robespierre at a future date.

And Catherine was cruelly punished for her preference for the Duc d'Anjou, which made her hold her two elder sons so cheap. Henri III. having ceased, like all spoilt children, to care for his mother, rushed voluntarily into such debauchery as made him, what the mother had made Charles IX., a childless husband, a king without an heir. Unhappily, Catherine's youngest son, the Duc d'Alençon, died—a natural death. The Queen-mother made every effort to control her son's passions. History preserves the tradition of a supper to nude women given in the banqueting-hall at Chenonceaux on his return from Poland, but it did not cure Henri III. of his bad habits.

This great Queen's last words summed up her policy, which was indeed so governed by good sense that we see the Cabinets of every country putting it into practice in similar circumstances.

'Well cut, my son,' said she, when Henri III. came to her, on her deathbed, to announce that the enemy or the throne had been put to death. 'Now you must sew up again.'

She thus expressed her opinion that the sovereign must make friends with the House of Lorraine, and make it useful, as the only way to hinder the effects of the Guises' hatred, by giving them a hope of circumventing the King. But this indefatigable cunning of the Italian and the woman was incompatible with Henri III.'s life of debauchery. When once the Great Mother was dead, the Mother of Armies (*Mater castrorum*), the policy of the Valois died too.

Before attempting to write this picture of manners in action, the author patiently and minutely studied the principal reigns of French history, the quarrels of the Burgundians and the Armagnacs, and those of the Guises and the Valois, each in the forefront of a century. His purpose was to write a picturesque history of France,

Isabella of Bavaria, Catherine and Marie de' Medici, each fills a conspicuous place, dominating from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries, and leading up to Louis XIV.

Of these three queens, Catherine was the most interesting and the most beautiful. Hers was a manly rule, not disgraced by the terrible amours of Isabella, nor those, even more terrible though less known, of Marie de' Medici. Isabella brought the English into France to oppose her son, was in love with her brother-in-law, the Duc d'Orléans, and with Boisbourdon. Marie de' Medici's account is still heavier. Neither of them had any political genius.

In the course of these studies and comparisons, the author became convinced of Catherine's greatness; by initiating himself into the peculiar difficulties of her position, he discerned how unjust historians, biassed by Protestantism, had been to this queen; and the outcome was the three sketches here presented, in which some erroneous opinions of her, of those who were about her, and of the aspect of the times, are combated.

The work is placed among my Philosophical Studies, because it illustrates the spirit of a period, and plainly shows the influence of opinions.

But before depicting the political arena on which Catherine comes into collision with the two great obstacles in her career, it is necessary to give a short account of her previous life from the point of view of an impartial critic, so that the reader may form a general idea of this large and royal life up to the time when the first part of this narrative opens.

Never at any period, in any country, or in any ruling family was there more contempt felt for legitimacy than by the famous race of the Medici (in French commonly written and pronounced Medicis). They held the same opinion of monarchy as is now professed in Russia: The ruler on whom the crown devolves is the real and

legitimate monarch. Mirabeau was justified in saying, 'There has been but one mésalliance in my family—that with the Medici'; for, notwithstanding the exertions of well-paid genealogists, it is certain that the Medici, till the time of Avérardo de' Medici, gonfaloniere of Florence in 1314, were no more than Florentine merchants of great wealth. The first personage of the family who filled a conspicuous place in the history of the great Tuscan Republic was Salvestro de' Medici, gonfaloniere in 1378. This Salvestro had two sons—Cosmo and Lorenzo de' Medici.

From Cosmo descended Lorenzo the Magnificent, the Duc de Nemours, the Duke of Urbino, Catherine's father, Pope Leo x., Pope Clement vii., and Alessandro, not indeed Duke of Florence, as he is sometimes called, but Duke *della città di Penna*, a title created by Pope Clement vii. as a step towards that of Grand Duke of Tuscany.

Lorenzo's descendants were Lorenzino—the Brutus of Florence—who killed Duke Alessandro; Cosmo, the first Grand Duke, and all the rulers of Florence till 1737, when the family became extinct.

But neither of the two branches—that of Cosmo or that of Lorenzo—succeeded in a direct line, till the time when Marie de' Medici's father subjugated Tuscany, and the Grand Dukes inherited in regular succession. Thus Alessandro de' Medici, who assumed the title of Duke *della città di Penna*, and whom Lorenzino assassinated, was the son of the Duke of Urbino, Catherine's father, by a Moorish slave. Hence Lorenzino, the legitimate son of Lorenzo, had a double right to kill Alessandro, both as a usurper in the family and as an oppressor of the city. Some historians have indeed supposed that Alessandro was the son of Clement vii. The event that led to the recognition of this bastard as head of the Republic was his marriage with Margaret of Austria, the natural daughter of Charles v.

Francesco de' Medici, the husband of Bianca Capello, recognised as his son a child of low birth bought by that notorious Venetian lady; and, strange to say, Fernando, succeeding Francesco, upheld the hypothetical rights of this boy. Indeed, this youth, known as Don Antonio de' Medici, was recognised by the family during four ducal reigns; he won the affection of all, did them important service, and was universally regretted.

Almost all the early Medici had natural children, whose lot was in every case splendid. The Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, Pope Clement VII., was the illegitimate son of Giuliano I. Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici was also a bastard, and he was within an ace of being Pope and head of the family.

Certain inventors of anecdote have a story that the Duke of Urbino, Catherine's father, told her: '*A figlia d'inganno non manca mai figliuolanza*' (A clever woman can always have children, *à propos* to some natural defect in Henri, the second son of François I., to whom she was betrothed). This Lorenzo de' Medici, Catherine's father, had married, for the second time, in 1518, Madeleine de la Tour d'Auvergne, and died in 1519, a few days after his wife, who died in giving birth to Catherine. Catherine was thus fatherless and motherless as soon as she saw the light. Hence the strange events of her childhood, chequered by the violent struggles of the Florentines, in the attempt to recover their liberty, against the Medici who were determined to govern Florence, but who were so circumspect in their policy that Catherine's father took the title of Duke of Urbino.

At his death, the legitimate head of the House of the Medici was Pope Leo X., who appointed Giuliano's illegitimate son, Giulio de' Medici, then Cardinal, Governor of Florence. Leo X. was Catherine's grand-uncle, and this Cardinal Giulio, afterwards Clement VII., was her *left-handed* uncle only. This it was which

made Brantôme so wittily speak of that Pope as an 'uncle in Our Lady.'

During the siege by the Medici to regain possession of Florence, the Republican party, not satisfied with having shut up Catherine, then nine years old, in a convent, after stripping her of all her possessions, proposed to expose her to the fire of the artillery, between two battlements—the suggestion of a certain Battista Cei. Bernardo Castiglione went even further in a council held to determine on some conclusion to the business; he advised that, rather than surrender Catherine to the Pope who demanded it, she should be handed over to the tender mercies of the soldiers. All revolutions of the populace are alike. Catherine's policy, always in favour of Royal authority, may have been fostered by such scenes, which an Italian girl of nine could not fail to understand.

Alessandro's promotion, to which Clement VII., himself a bastard, largely contributed, was no doubt owing partly to the fact of his being illegitimate, and to Charles V.'s affection for his famous natural daughter Margaret. Thus the Pope and the Emperor were moved by similar feelings. At this period Venice was mistress of the commerce of the world; Rome governed its morals; Italy was still supreme, by the poets, the generals, and the statesmen who were her sons. At no other time has any one country had so curious or so various a multitude of men of genius. There were so many, that the smallest princelings were superior men. Italy was overflowing with talent, daring, science, poetry, wealth, and gallantry, though rent by constant internal wars, and at all times the arena on which conquerors met to fight for her fairest provinces.

When men are so great, they are not afraid to confess their weakness; hence, no doubt, this golden age for bastards. And it is but justice to declare that these illegitimate sons of the Medici were ardent for the glory

and the advancement of the family, alike in possessions and in power. And as soon as the Duke *della città di Penna*, the Moorish slave's son, was established as Tyrant of Florence, he took up the interest shown by Pope Clement VII. for Lorenzo II.'s daughter, now eleven years of age.

As we study the march of events and of men in that strange sixteenth century, we must never forget that the chief element of political conduct was unremitting craft, destroying in every nature the upright conduct, the *squareness* which imagination looks for in eminent men. In this, especially, lies Catherine's absolution. This observation, in fact, disposes of all the mean and foolish accusations brought against her by the writers of the reformed faith. It was indeed the golden age of this type of policy, of which Machiavelli and Spinoza formulated the code, and Hobbes and Montesquieu; for the Dialogue of 'Sylla and Eucrates' expresses Montesquieu's real mind, which he could not set forth in any other form in consequence of his connection with the Encyclopedists. These principles are to this day the unconfessed morality of every Cabinet where schemes of vast dominion are worked out. In France we were severe on Napoleon when he exerted this Italian genius which was in his blood, and its plots did not always succeed; but Charles V., Catherine, Philip II., Giulio II., would have done just as he did in the affairs of Spain.

At the time when Catherine was born, history, if related from the point of view of honesty, would seem an impossible romance. Charles V., while forced to uphold the Catholic Church against the attacks of Luther, who by threatening the tiara threatened his throne, allowed Rome to be besieged, and kept Pope Clement VII. in prison. This same Pope, who had no more bitter foe than Charles V., cringed to him that he might place Alessandro de' Medici at Florence, and the Emperor gave his daughter in marriage to the bastard Duke. No sooner

was he firmly settled there than Alessandro, in concert with the Pope, attempted to injure Charles v. by an alliance, through Catherine de' Medici, with Francis I., and both promised to assist the French king to conquer Italy.

Lorenzino de' Medici became Alessandro's boon companion, and pandered to him to get an opportunity of killing him; and Filippo Strozzi, one of the loftiest spirits of that age, regarded this murder with such high esteem that he vowed that each of his sons should marry one of the assassin's daughters. The sons religiously fulfilled the father's pledge at a time when each of them, under Catherine's protection, could have made a splendid alliance; for one was Doria's rival, and the other Marshal of France.

Cosmo de' Medici, Alessandro's successor, avenged the death of the Tyrant with great cruelty, and persistently for twelve years, during which his hatred never flagged against the people who had, after all, placed him in power. He was eighteen years of age when he succeeded to the government; his first act was to annul the rights of Alessandro's legitimate sons, at the time when he was avenging Alessandro! Charles v. confirmed the dispossession of his grandson, and recognised Cosmo instead of Alessandro's son.

Cosmo, raised to the throne by Cardinal Cibo, at once sent the prelate into exile. Then Cardinal Cibo accused his creature, Cosmo, the first Grand Duke, of having tried to poison Alessandro's son. The Grand Duke, as jealous of his authority as Charles v. was of his, abdicated, like the Emperor, in favour of his son Francesco, after ordering the death of Don Garcias, his other son, in revenge for that of Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici, whom Garcias had assassinated.

Cosmo I. and his son Francesco, who ought to have been devoted, soul and body, to the Royal House of France, the only power able to lend them support, were

the humble servants of Charles v. and Philip II., and consequently the secret, perfidious, and cowardly foes of Catherine de' Medici, one of the glories of their race.

Such are the more important features—contradictory and illogical indeed—the dishonest acts, the dark intrigues of the House of the Medici alone. From this sketch some idea may be formed of the other princes of Italy and Europe. Every envoy from Cosmo I. to the Court of France had secret instructions to poison Strozzi, Queen Catherine's relation, when he should find him there. Charles v. had three ambassadors from Francis I. murdered.

It was early in October 1533 that the Duke *della città di Penna* left Florence for Leghorn, accompanied by Catherine de' Medici, sole heiress of Lorenzo II. The Duke and the Princess of Florence, for this was the title borne by the girl, now fourteen years of age, left the city with a large following of servants, officials, and secretaries, preceded by men-at-arms, and escorted by a mounted guard. The young Princess as yet knew nothing of her fate, excepting that the Pope and Duke Alessandro were to have an interview at Leghorn; but her uncle, Filippo Strozzi, soon told her of the future that lay before her.

Filippo Strozzi had married Clarissa de' Medici, whole sister to Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino, Catherine's father; but this union, arranged quite as much with a view to converting one of the stoutest champions of the popular cause to the support of Medici as to secure the recall of that then exiled family, never shook the tenets of the rough soldier who was persecuted by his party for having consented to it. In spite of some superficial change of conduct, somewhat overruled by this alliance, he remained faithful to the popular side, and declared against the Medici as soon as he perceived their scheme of subjugating Florence. This great man even refused

the offer of a principality from Leo x. At that time Filippo Strozzi was a victim to the policy of the Medici, so shifty in its means, so unvarying in its aim.

After sharing the Pope's misfortunes and captivity, when, surprised by Colonna, he took refuge in the castle of Saint-Angelo, he was given up by Clement vii. as a hostage and carried to Naples. As soon as the Pope was free, he fell upon his foes, and Strozzi was then near being killed; he was forced to pay an enormous bribe to get out of the prison, where he was closely guarded. As soon as he was at liberty, with the natural trustfulness of an honest man, he was simple enough to appear before Clement vii., who perhaps had flattered himself that he was rid of him. The Pope had so much to be ashamed of that he received Strozzi very ungraciously. Thus Strozzi had very early begun his apprenticeship to the life of disaster, which is that of a man who is honest in politics, and whose conscience will not lend itself to the caprices of opportunity, whose actions are pleasing only to virtue, which is persecuted by all—by the populace, because it withstands their blind passions; by authority, because it resists its usurpations.

The life of these great citizens is a martyrdom, through which they have nothing to support them but the strong voice of conscience, and the sense of social duty, which in all cases dictates their conduct.

There were many such men in the Republic of Florence, all as great as Strozzi and as masterly as their adversaries on the Medici side, though beaten by Florentine cunning. In the conspiracy of the Pazzi, what can be finer than the attitude of the head of that house? His trade was immense, and he settled all his accounts with Asia, the Levant, and Europe before carrying out that great plot, to the end that his correspondents should not be the losers if he should fail.

And the history of the rise of the Medici family in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is one of the finest

that remains unwritten, though men of great genius have attempted it. It is not the history of a republic, or of any particular community or phase of civilisation; it is the history of political man, and the eternal history of political developments, that of usurpers and conquerors.

On his return to Florence, Filippo Strozzi restored the ancient form of government, and banished Ippolito de' Medici, another bastard, as well as Alessandro, with whom he was now acting. But he then was afraid of the inconstancy of the populace; and as he dreaded Pope Clement's vengeance, he went to take charge of a large commercial house he had at Lyons in correspondence with his bankers at Venice and Rome, in France, and in Spain. A strange fact! These men, who bore the burthen of public affairs as well as that of a perennial struggle with the Medici, to say nothing of their squabbles with their own party, could also endure the cares of commerce and speculation, of banking with all its complications, which the vast multiplicity of coinages and frequent forgeries made far more difficult then than now. The word banker is derived from the bench on which they sat, and which served also to ring the gold and silver pieces on. Strozzi found in his adored wife's death a pretext to offer to the Republican party, whose police is always all the more terrible because everybody is a voluntary spy in the name of Liberty, which justifies all things.

Filippo's return to Florence happened just at the time when the city was compelled to bow to Alessandro's yoke; but he had previously been to see Pope Clement, with whom matters were so promising that his feelings towards Strozzi had changed. In the moment of triumph the Medici so badly needed such a man as Strozzi, were it only to lend a grace to Alessandro's assumption of dignity, that Clement persuaded him to sit on the bastard's council, which was about to take oppressive measures, and Filippo had accepted a diploma as senator.

But for the last two years and a half—like Seneca and Burrhus with Nero—he had noted the beginnings of tyranny. He found himself the object of distrust to the populace, and so little in favour with the Medici, whom he opposed, that he foresaw a catastrophe. And as soon as he heard from Alessandro of the negotiations for the marriage of Catherine with a French Prince, which were perhaps to be concluded at Leghorn, where the contracting powers had agreed to meet, he resolved to go to France and follow the fortunes of his niece, who would need a guardian. Alessandro, delighted to be quit of a man so difficult to manage in what concerned Florence, applauded this decision, which spared him a murder, and advised Strozzi to place himself at the head of Catherine's household.

In point of fact, to dazzle the French Court, the Medici had constituted a brilliant suite for the young girl whom they quite incorrectly styled the Princess of Florence, and who was also called the Duchess of Urbino. The procession, at the head of it Duke Alessandro, Catherine, and Strozzi, consisted of more than a thousand persons, exclusive of the escort and serving-men; and when the last of them were still at the gate of Florence, the foremost had already got beyond the first village outside the town—where straw plait for hats is now made.

It was beginning to be generally known that Catherine was to marry a son of Francis the First, but as yet it was no more than a rumour which found confirmation in the country from this triumphant progress from Florence to Leghorn. From the preparations required, Catherine suspected that her marriage was in question, and her uncle revealed to her the abortive scheme of her ambitious family, who had aspired to the hand of the Dauphin. Duke Alessandro still hoped that the Duke of Albany might succeed in changing the determination of the French King, who, though anxious to secure the aid of the Medici in Italy, would only give them the Duc

d'Orléans. This narrowness lost Italy to France, and did not hinder Catherine from being Queen.

This Duke of Albany, the son of Alexander Stewart, brother of James III. of Scotland, had married Anne de la Tour de Boulogne, sister to Madeleine, Catherine's mother; he was thus her maternal uncle. It was through her mother that Catherine was so rich and connected with so many families; for, strangely enough, Diane de Poitiers, her rival, was also her cousin. Jean de Poitiers, Diane's father, was son of Jeanne de la Tour de Boulogne, the Duchess of Urbino's aunt. Catherine was also related to Mary Stewart, her daughter-in-law.

Catherine was now informed that her dower in money would amount to a hundred thousand ducats. The ducat was a gold piece as large as one of our old louis-d'or, but only half as thick. Thus a hundred thousand ducats in those days represented, in consequence of the high value of gold, six millions of francs at the present time, the ducat being worth about twelve francs. The importance of the banking-house of Strozzi, at Lyons, may be imagined from this, as it was his factor there who paid over the twelve hundred thousand livres in gold. The counties of Auvergne and Lauraguais also formed part of Catherine's portion, and the Pope Clement VII. made her a gift of a hundred thousand ducats more in jewels, precious stones, and other wedding gifts, to which Duke Alessandro contributed.

On reaching Leghorn, Catherine, still so young, must have been flattered by the extraordinary magnificence displayed by Pope Clement VII., her 'uncle in Our Lady,' then the head of the House of Medici, to crush the Court of France. He had arrived at the port in one of his galleys hung with crimson satin trimmed with gold fringe, and covered with an awning of cloth of gold. This barge, of which the decorations had cost nearly twenty thousand ducats, contained several rooms for the use of Henri de France's future bride, furnished with the

choicest curiosities the Medici had been able to collect. The oarsmen, magnificently dressed, and the seamen were under the captaincy of a Prior of the Order of the Knights of Rhodes. The Pope's household filled three more barges.

The Duke of Albany's galleys, moored by the side of the Pope's, formed, with these, a considerable flotilla.

Duke Alessandro presented the officers of Catherine's household to the Pope, with whom he held a secret conference, introducing to him, as seems probable, Count Sebastian Montecuculi, who had just left the Emperor's service — rather suddenly, it was said — and the two Generals, Antonio de Leyva and Fernando Gonzaga. Was there a premeditated plan between these two bastards to make the Duc d'Orléans the Dauphin? What was the reward promised to Count Sebastian Montecuculi, who, before entering the service of Charles v., had studied medicine? History is silent on these points. We shall see indeed in what obscurity the subject is wrapped. It is so great that some serious and conscientious historians have recently recognised Montecuculi's innocence.

Catherine was now officially informed by the Pope himself of the alliance proposed for her. The Duke of Albany had had great difficulty in keeping the King of France to his promise of giving even his second son to Catherine de' Medici; and Clement's impatience was so great, he was so much afraid of seeing his schemes upset either by some intrigue on the part of the Emperor, or by the haughtiness of France, where the great nobles cast an evil eye on this union, that he embarked forthwith and made for Marseilles. He arrived there at the end of October 1533.

In spite of his splendour, the House of the Medici was eclipsed by the sovereign of France. To show to what a pitch these great bankers carried their magnificence, the dozen pieces given by the Pope in the bride's wedding purse

consisted of gold medals of inestimable historical interest, for they were at that time unique. But Francis I., who loved festivity and display, distinguished himself on this occasion. The wedding feasts for Henri de Valois and Catherine went on for thirty-four days. It is useless to repeat here details which may be read in every history of Provence and Marseilles as to this famous meeting between the Pope and the King of France, which was the occasion of a jest of the Duke of Albany's as to the duty of fasting; a retort recorded by Brantôme which vastly amused the Court, and shows the tone of manners at that time.

Though Henri de Valois was but three weeks older than Catherine, the Pope insisted on the immediate consummation of the marriage between these two children, so greatly did he dread the subterfuges of diplomacy and the trickery commonly practised at that period. Clement, indeed, anxious for proof, remained thirty-four days at Marseilles, in the hope, it is said, of some visible evidence in his young relation, who at fourteen was marriageable. And it was, no doubt, when questioning Catherine before his departure, that he tried to console her by the famous speech ascribed to Catherine's father: '*A figlia d'inganno, non manca mai la figliuolanza.*'

The strangest conjectures have been given to the world as to the causes of Catherine's barrenness during ten years. Few persons nowadays are aware that various medical works contain suppositions as to this matter, so grossly indecent that they could not be repeated.[1] This gives some clue to the strange calumnies which still blacken this Queen, whose every action was distorted to her injury. The reason lay simply with her husband. It is sufficient evidence that at a time when no prince was shy of having natural children, Diane de Poitiers, far more highly favoured than his wife, had no children; and nothing is commoner in surgical experience than

[1] See *Bayle.* Art. *Ferne.*

such a malformation as this Prince's, which gave rise to a jest of the ladies of the Court, who would have made him Abbé de Saint-Victor, at a time when the French language was as free as the Latin tongue. After the Prince was operated on, Catherine had ten children.

The delay was a happy thing for France. If Henri II. had had children by Diane de Poitiers, it would have caused serious political complications. At the time of his treatment, the Duchesse de Valentinois was in the second youth of womanhood. These facts alone show that the history of Catherine de' Medici remains to be entirely re-written; and that, as Napoleon very shrewdly remarked, the history of France should be in one volume only, or in a thousand.

When we compare the conduct of Charles V. with that of the King of France during the Pope's stay at Marseilles, it is greatly to the advantage of Francis—as indeed in every instance. Here is a brief report of this meeting as given by a contemporary:—

'His Holiness the Pope, having been conducted to the Palace prepared for him, as I have said, outside the port, each one withdrew to his chamber until the morrow, when his said Holiness prepared to make his entry. Which was done with great sumptuousness and magnificence, he being set on a throne borne on the shoulders of two men in his pontifical habit, saving only the tiara, while before him went a white palfrey bearing the Holy Sacrament, the said palfrey being led by two men on foot in very fine raiment holding a bridle of white silk. After him came all the cardinals in their habit, riding their pontifical mules, and Madame the Duchess of Urbino in great magnificence, with a goodly company of ladies and gentlemen alike of France and of Italy. And the Pope, with all this company, being come to the place prepared where they should lodge, each one withdrew; and all this was ordered and done without any disorder or tumult. Now, while as the Pope was making his

entry, the King crossed the water in his frigate and went to lodge there whence the Pope had come, to the end that on the morrow he might come from thence to pay homage to the Holy Father, as beseemed a most Christian King.

'The King being then ready, set forth to go to the Palace where the Pope was, accompanied by the Princes of his blood, Monseigneur the Duc de Vendosmois (father of the Vidame de Chartres), the Comte de Saint-Pol, Monsieur de Montmorency, and Monsieur de la Roche-sur-Yon, the Duc de Nemours (brother to the Duke of Savoy who died at that place), the Duke of Albany, and many others, counts, barons, and nobles, the Duc de Montmorency being at all times about the King's person. The King, being come to the Palace, was received by the Pope and all the College of Cardinals assembled in consistory, with much civility (*fort humainement*). This done, each one went to the place appointed to him, and the King took with him many cardinals to feast them, and among them Cardinal de' Medici, the Pope's nephew, a very magnificent lord with a fine escort. On the morrow, those deputed by his Holiness and by the King began to treat of those matters whereon they had met to agree. First of all, they treated of the question of faith, and a bull was read for the repression of heresy, and to hinder things from coming to a greater combustion (*une plus grande combustion*) than they are in already. Then was performed the marriage ceremony between the Duc d'Orléans, the King's second son, and Catherine de' Medici, Duchess of Urbino, his Holiness' niece, under conditions the same, or nearly the same, as had been formerly proposed to the Duke of Albany. The said marriage was concluded with great magnificence, and our Holy Father married them.[1] This marriage being

[1] At that time in French, as in Italian, the words *marry* and *espouse* were used in a contrary sense to their present meaning. *Marier* was the fact of being married, *épouser* was the priestly function.

thus concluded, the Holy Father held a consistory, wherein he created four cardinals to wait on the King, to wit: Cardinal le Veneur, heretofore Bishop of Lisieux and High Almoner; Cardinal de Boulogne, of the family of la Chambre, half-brother on his mother's side to the Duke of Albany; Cardinal de Châtillon of the family of Coligny, nephew to the Sire de Montmorency; and Cardinal de Givry.'

When Strozzi paid down the marriage portion in the presence of the Court, he observed some surprise on the part of the French nobles; they said pretty loudly that it was a small price for such a mésalliance—what would they say to-day? Cardinal Ippolito replied—

'Then you are not informed as to your King's secrets. His Holiness consents to bestow on France three pearls of inestimable price—Genoa, Milan, and Naples.'

The Pope left Count Sebastian Montecuculi to present himself at the French Court, where he made an offer of his services, complaining of Antonio de Leyva and Fernando Gonzaga, for which reason he was accepted. Montecuculi was not one of Catherine's household, which was composed entirely of French ladies and gentlemen; for, by a law of the realm which the Pope was rejoiced to see carried out, Catherine was naturalised by letters patent before her marriage. Montecuculi was at first attached to the household of the Queen, Charles v.'s sister. Then, not long after, he entered the Dauphin's service in the capacity of cupbearer.

The Duchesse d'Orléans found herself entirely swamped at the Court of Francis I. Her young husband was in love with Diane de Poitiers, who was certainly her equal in point of birth, and a far greater lady. The daughter of the Medici took rank below Queen Eleanor, Charles v.'s sister, and the Duchesse d'Etampes, whose marriage to the head of the family of de Brosse had

given her one of the most powerful positions and highest titles in France. Her aunt, the Duchess of Albany, the Queen of Navarre, the Duchesse de Guise, the Duchesse de Vendôme, the wife of the Connétable, and many other women, by their birth and privileges as well as by their influence in the most sumptuous Court ever held by a French King—not excepting Louis XIV.—wholly eclipsed the daughter of the Florentine merchants, who was indeed more illustrious and richer through the Tour de Boulogne family than through her descent from the Medici.

Filippo Strozzi, a republican at heart, regarded his niece's position as so critical and difficult, that he felt himself incapable of directing her in the midst of conflicting interests, and deserted her at the end of a year, being indeed recalled to Italy by the death of Clement VII. Catherine's conduct, when we remember that she was but just fifteen, was a marvel of prudence. She very adroitly attached herself to the King, her father-in-law, leaving him as rarely as possible; she was with him on horseback, in hunting, and in war.

Her adoration of Francis I. saved the House of Medici from all suspicion when the Dauphin died poisoned. At that time Catherine and the Duc d'Orléans were at the King's headquarters in Provence, for France had already been invaded by Charles V., the King's brother-in-law. The whole Court had remained on the scene of the wedding festivities, now the theatre of the most barbarous war. Just as Charles V., compelled to retreat, had fled, leaving the bones of his army in Provence, the Dauphin was returning to Lyons by the Rhone. Stopping at Tournon for the night, to amuse himself, he went through some athletic exercises, such as formed almost the sole education he or his brother received, in consequence of their long detention as hostages. The Prince being very hot—it was in the

month of August—was so rash as to ask for a glass of water, which was given to him, iced, by Montecuculi. The Dauphin died almost instantaneously.

The King idolised his son. The Dauphin was indeed, as historians are agreed, a very accomplished Prince. His father, in despair, gave the utmost publicity to the proceedings against Montecuculi, and placed the matter in the hands of the most learned judges of the day.

After heroically enduring the first tests of torture without confessing anything, the Count made an avowal by which he fully implicated the Emperor and his two generals, Antonio de Leyva and Fernando Gonzago. This, however, did not satisfy Francis I. Never was a case more solemnly thrashed out than this. An eye-witness gives the following account of what the King did :—

'The King called all the Princes of the Blood, and all the Knights of his Order, and many other high personages of the realm, to meet at Lyons; the Pope's Legate and Nuncio, the cardinals who were of his Court, and the ambassadors of England, Scotland, Portugal, Venice, Ferrara, and others; together with all the princes and great nobles of foreign countries, both of Italy and of Germany, who were at that time residing at his Court, to wit: The Duke of Wittemberg, in Allemaigne; the Dukes of Somma, of Arianna, and of Atria; the Princes of Melphe [Malfi?] (who had desired to marry Catherine), and of Stilliano, Neapolitan; the Marquis di Vigevo, of the House of Trivulzio, Milanese; the Signor Giovanni Paolo di Ceri, Roman; the Signor Césare Fregose, Genoese; the Signor Annibale Gonzaga, Mantuan, and many more. Who being assembled, he caused to be read in their presence, from the beginning to the end, the trial of that wretched man who had poisoned his late Highness the Dauphin, with all the interrogations, confessions, confrontings, and

other proceedings usual in criminal trials, not choosing that the sentence should be carried out until all those present had given their opinion on this monstrous and miserable matter.'

Count Montecuculi's fidelity and devotion may seem extraordinary in our day of universal indiscretion, when everybody, and even Ministers, talk over the most trivial incidents in which they have put a finger; but in those times princes could command devoted servants, or knew how to choose them. There were monarchical Moreys then, because there was faith. Never look for great things from self-interest: interests may change; but look for anything from feeling, from religious faith, monarchical faith, patriotic faith. These three beliefs alone can produce a Berthereau of Geneva, a Sydney or a Strafford in England, assassins to murder Thomas à Becket, or a Montecuculi; Jacques Cœur and Jeanne d'Arc, or Richelieu and Danton; a Bonchamp, a Talmont, or a Clément, a Chabot.

Charles v. made use of the highest personages to carry out the murder of three ambassadors from Francis I. A year later Lorenzino, Catherine's cousin, assassinated Duke Alessandro after three years of dissimulation, and in circumstances which gained him the surname of the Florentine Brutus. The rank of the victim was so little a check on such undertakings that neither Leo x. nor Clement VII. seems to have died a natural death. Mariana, the historian of Philip II., almost jests in speaking of the death of the Queen of Spain, a Princess of France, saying that 'for the greater glory of the Spanish throne God suffered the blindness of the doctors who treated the Queen for dropsy.' When King Henri II. allowed himself to utter a scandal which deserved a sword-thrust, he could find la Châtaignerie willing to take it. At that time royal personages had their meals served to them in padlocked boxes of which they had the key. Hence the *droit de cadenas*, the *right of the*

padlock, an honour which ceased to exist in the reign of Louis XIV.

The Dauphin died of poison, the same perhaps as caused the death of MADAME, under Louis XIV. Pope Clement had been dead two years; Duke Alessandro, steeped in debauchery, seemed to have no interest in the Duc d'Orléans' elevation. Catherine, now seventeen years old, was with her father-in-law, whom she devotedly admired; Charles V. alone seemed to have an interest in the Dauphin's death, because Francis I. intended his son to form an alliance which would have extended the power of France. Thus the Count's confession was very ingeniously based on the passions and policy of the day. Charles V. had fled after seeing his troops overwhelmed in Provence, and with them his good fortune, his reputation, and his hopes of aggrandisement. And note, that even if an innocent man had confessed under torture, the King afterwards gave him freedom of speech before an august assembly, and in the presence of men with whom innocence had a fair chance of a hearing. The King wanted the truth, and sought it in good faith.

In spite of her now brilliant prospects, Catherine's position at court was unchanged by the Dauphin's death; her childlessness made a divorce seem probable when her husband should become king. The Dauphin was now enslaved by Diane de Poitiers, who had dared to be the rival of Madame d'Etampes. Catherine was therefore doubly attentive and insinuating to her father-in-law, understanding that he was her sole mainstay.

Thus the first ten years of Catherine's married life were spent in the unceasing regrets caused by repeated disappointments when she hoped to have a child, and the vexations of her rivalry with Diane. Imagine what the life must be of a princess constantly spied on by a jealous mistress who was favoured by the Catholic party, and by the strong support the Sénéchale had acquired through

the marriage of her daughters—one to Robert de la Mark, Duc de Bouillon, Prince de Sédan ; the other to Claude de Lorraine, Duc d'Aumale.

Swamped between the party of the Duchesse d'Etampes and that of the Sénéchale (the title borne by Diane de Poitiers during the reign of Francis I.), who divided the Court and political feeling between the two mortal foes, Catherine tried to be the friend of both the Duchess and Diane de Poitiers. She, who was to become so great a queen, played the part of a subaltern. Thus she served her apprenticeship to the double-faced policy which afterwards was the secret clue to her life. At a later date the queen found herself between the Catholics and the Calvinists, as the woman had been, for ten years, between Madame d'Etampes and Madame de Poitiers.

She studied the contradictions of French policy. Francis upheld Calvin and the Lutherans, to annoy Charles V. Then, after having covertly and patiently fostered the Reformation in Germany, after tolerating Calvin's presence at the Court of Navarre, he turned against it with undisguised severity. So Catherine could see the Court and the women of the Court playing with the fire of heresy ; Diane at the head of the Catholic party with the Guises, only because the Duchesse d'Etampes was on the side of Calvin and the Protestants.

This was Catherine's political education ; and in the King's private circle she could study the mistakes made by the Medici. The Dauphin was antagonistic to his father on every point ; he was a bad son. He forgot the hardest but the truest axiom of Royalty, namely, that the throne is a responsible entity, and that a son who may oppose his father during his lifetime must carry out his policy on succeeding to the throne. Spinoza, who was as deep a politician as he was a great philosopher, says, in treating of the case of a king who has succeeded to another by a revolution or by treason : 'If the new King hopes to secure his throne and protect his

life, he must display so much zeal in avenging his predecessor's death that no one shall feel tempted to repeat such a crime. But to avenge him worthily it is not enough that he should shed the blood of his subjects; he must confirm the maxims of him whose place he fills, and walk in the same ways of government.'

It was the application of this principle which gave the Medici to Florence. Cosmo I., Alessandro's successor, eleven years later instigated the murder, at Venice, of the Florentine Brutus, and, as has been said, persecuted the Strozzi without mercy. It was the neglect of this principle that overthrew Louis XVI. That King was false to every principle of government when he reinstated the Parlements suppressed by his grandfather. Louis XV. had been clear-sighted; the Parlements, and especially that of Paris, were quite half to blame for the disorders that necessitated the assembling of the States-General. Louis XV.'s mistake was that when he threw down that barrier between the throne and the people, he did not erect a stronger one, that he did not substitute for the Parlements a strong constitutional rule in the provinces. There lay the remedy for the evils of the Monarchy, the voting power for taxation and the incidence of the taxes, with consent gradually won to the reforms needed in the monarchical rule.

Henri II.'s first act was to give all his confidence to the Connétable de Montmorency, whom his father had desired him to leave in banishment. The Connétable de Montmorency, with Diane de Poitiers, to whom he was closely attached, was master of the kingdom. Hence Catherine was even less powerful and happy as Queen of France than she had been as the Dauphiness.

At first, from the year 1543, she had a child every year for ten years, and was fully taken up by her maternal functions during that time, which included the last years of Francis I.'s reign, and almost the whole of

her husband's. It is impossible not to detect in this constant child-bearing the malicious influence of a rival who thus kept the legitimate wife out of the way. This feminine and barbarous policy was no doubt one of Catherine's grievances against Diane. Being thus kept out of the tide of affairs, this clever woman spent her time in observing all the interests of the persons at Court, and all the parties formed there. The Italians who had followed her excited violent suspicions. After the execution of Montecuculi, the Connétable de Montmorency, Diane, and most of the crafty politicians at Court were racked with doubts of the Medici; but Francis I. always scouted them. Still the Gondi, the Biraguas, the Strozzi, the Ruggieri, the Sardini, in short, all who were classed as the Italians who had arrived in Catherine's wake, were compelled to exercise every faculty of wit, policy, and courage to enable them to remain at Court under the burthen of disfavour that weighed on them. During the supremacy of Diane de Poitiers, Catherine's obligingness went so far that some clever folks have seen in it an evidence of the profound dissimulation to which she was compelled by men and circumstances, and by the conduct of Henri II. But it is going too far to say that she never asserted her rights as a wife and a queen. Her ten children (besides one miscarriage) were a sufficient explanation of the King's conduct, who was thus set free to spend his time with Diane de Poitiers. But the King certainly never fell short of what he owed to himself; he gave the Queen an entry worthy of any that had previously taken place, on the occasion of her coronation. The records of the *Parlement* and of the Exchequer prove that these two important bodies went to meet Catherine outside Paris, as far as Saint-Lazare. Here, indeed, is a passage from du Tillet's narrative :—

'A scaffolding had been erected at Saint-Lazare, whereon was a throne (which du Tillet calls a chair of

state, *chaire de parement*). Catherine seated herself on this, dressed in a surcoat, or sort of cape of ermine, covered with jewels; beneath it a bodice, with a court train, and on her head a crown of pearls and diamonds; she was supported by the Maréchale de la Mark, her lady of honour. Around her, standing, were the princes of the Blood and other princes and noblemen richly dressed, with the Chancellor of France in a robe of cloth of gold in a pattern on a ground of red cramoisy.[1] In front of the Queen and on the same scaffolding were seated, in two rows, twelve duchesses and countesses, dressed in surcoats of ermine, stomachers, trains, and fillets, that is to say, coronets, whether duchesses or countesses. There were the Duchesses d'Estouteville, de Montpensier—the elder and the younger—the Princesse de la Roche-sur-Yon; the Duchesses de Guise, de Nivernois, d'Aumale, de Valentinois (Diane de Poitiers); Mademoiselle the legitimised bastard "of France" (a title given to the King's daughter Diane, who became Duchesse de Castro-Farnese, and afterwards Duchesse de Montmorency-Damville), Madame la Connétable, and Mademoiselle de Nemours, not to mention the other ladies who could find no room. The four *capped* Presidents (*à mortier*), with some other members of the Court and the chief clerk, du Tillet, went up on to the platform and did their service, and the First President Lizet, kneeling on one knee, addressed the Queen. The Chancellor, likewise on one knee, made response. She made her entrance into Paris at about three in the afternoon, riding in an open litter, Madame Marguerite de France sitting opposite to her, and by the side of the litter came the Cardinals d'Amboise, de Châtillon, de Boulogne, and de Lenoncourt, in their rochets. She got out at the Church of Notre-Dame, and was received by the clergy. After she had made her prayer, she was

1 The old French word *cramoisi* did not mean merely a crimson red, but denoted a special excellence of the dye. (See Rabelais.)

carried along the Rue de la Calandre to the Palace, where the royal supper was spread in the great hall. She sat there in the middle at a marble table, under a canopy of velvet powdered with gold fleurs de lys.'

It will here be fitting to controvert a popular error which some persons have perpetuated, following Sauval in the mistake. It has been said that Henri II. carried his oblivion of decency so far as to place his mistress's initials even on the buildings which Catherine had advised him to undertake or to carry on at such lavish expense. But the cypher, which is to be seen at the Louvre, amply refutes those who have so little comprehension as to lend credit to such nonsense, a gratuitous slur on the honour of our kings and queens. The H for Henri and the two Cs, face to face, for Catherine seem indeed to make two Ds for Diane; and this coincidence was no doubt pleasing to the King. But it is not the less certain that the royal cypher was officially constructed of the initials of the King and the Queen. And this is so true, that the same cypher is still to be seen on the corn-market in Paris which Catherine herself had built. It may also be found in the crypt of Saint-Denis on Catherine's tomb, which she caused to be constructed during her lifetime by the side of that of Henri II., and on which she is represented from life by the sculptor to whom she sat.

On a solemn occasion, when he was setting out on an expedition to Germany, Henri II. proclaimed Catherine Regent during his absence, as also in the event of his death—on March 25, 1552. Catherine's bitterest enemy, the author of the *Discours merveilleux sur les déportements de Catherine II.*, admits that she acquitted herself of these functions to the general approbation, and that the King was satisfied with her administration. Henri II. had men and money at the right moment. And after the disastrous day of Saint-Quentin, Catherine obtained from the Parisians considerable sums, which she

forwarded to Compiègne, whither the King had come.

In politics Catherine made immense efforts to acquire some little influence. She was clever enough to gain over to her interests the Connétable de Montmorency, who was all-powerful under Henri II. The King's terrible reply to Montmorency's insistency is well known. This answer was the result of the good advice given by Catherine in the rare moments when she was alone with the King, and could explain to him the policy of the Florentines, which was to set the magnates of a kingdom by the ears and build up the sovereign authority on the ruins—Louis XI.'s system, subsequently carried out by Richelieu. Henri II., who saw only through the eyes of Diane and the Connétable, was quite a feudal King, and on friendly terms with the great Houses of the realm.

After an ineffectual effort in her favour made by the Connétable, probably in the year 1556, Catherine paid great court to the Guises, and schemed to detach them from Diane's party so as to set them in opposition to Montmorency. But, unfortunately, Diane and the Connétable were as virulent against the Protestants as the Guises were. Hence their antagonism lacked the virus which religious feeling would have given it. Besides, Diane boldly defied the Queen's plans by coquetting with the Guises and giving her daughter to the Duc d'Aumale. She went so far that she has been accused by some writers of granting more than smiles to the gallant Cardinal de Lorraine.[1]

[1] Some satirist of the time has left the following lines on Henri II. [in which the pun on the words Sire and Cire (wax) would be lost in translation] :—

'Sire, si vous laissez, comme Charles désire,
Comme Diane veut, par trop vous gouverner,
Fondre, pétrir, mollir, refondre, retourner,
Sire, vous n'êtes plus, vous n'êtes plus que cire.'

Charles was the Cardinal de Lorraine.

The signs of grief and the ostentatious regret displayed by Catherine on the King's death cannot be regarded as genuine. The fact that Henri II. had been so passionately and faithfully attached to Diane de Poitiers made it incumbent on Catherine that she should play the part of a neglected wife who idolised her husband; but, like every clever woman, she carried on her dissimulation, and never ceased to speak with tender regret of Henri II. Diane herself, it is well known, wore mourning all her life for her husband, Monsieur de Brézé. Her colours were black and white, and the King was wearing them at the tournament where he was fatally wounded. Catherine, in imitation no doubt of her rival, wore mourning for the King to the end of her life.

On the King's death, the Duchesse de Valentinois was shamelessly deserted and dishonoured by the Connétable de Montmorency, a man in every respect beneath his reputation. Diane sent to offer her estate and Château of Chenonceaux to the Queen. Catherine then replied in the presence of witnesses, 'I can never forget that she was all the joy of my dear Henri; I should be ashamed to accept, I will give her an estate in exchange. I would propose that of Chaumont-on-the-Loire.' The deed of exchange was, in fact, signed at Blois in 1559. Diane, whose sons-in-law were the Duc d'Aumale and the Duc de Bouillon, kept her whole fortune and died peacefully in 1566 at the age of sixty-six. She was thus nineteen years older than Henri II. These dates, copied from the epitaph on her tomb by an historian who studied the question at the end of the last century, clear up many historical difficulties; for many writers have said she was forty when her father was sentenced in 1523, while others have said she was but sixteen. She was, in fact, four-and-twenty.

After reading everything both for and against her conduct with Francis I., at a time when the House of Poitiers was in the greatest danger, we can neither confirm nor

deny anything. It is a passage of history that still remains obscure. We can see by what happens in our own day how history is falsified, as it were, in the making.

Catherine, who founded great hopes on her rival's age, several times made an attempt to overthrow her. On one occasion she was very near the accomplishment of her hopes. In 1554, Madame Diane, being ill, begged the King to go to Saint-Germain pending her recovery. This sovereign coquette would not be seen in the midst of the paraphernalia of doctors, nor bereft of the adjuncts of dress. To receive the King on his return, Catherine arranged a splendid *ballet*, in which five or six young ladies were to address him in verse. She selected for the purpose Miss Fleming, related to her uncle, the Duke of Albany, and one of the loveliest girls imaginable, fair and golden-haired; then a young connection of her own, Clarissa Strozzi, with magnificent black hair and rarely fine hands; Miss Lewiston, maid of honour to Mary Stewart; Mary Stewart herself; Madame Elisabeth de France, the unhappy Queen of Spain; and Madame Claude. Elisabeth was nine years old, Claude eight, and Mary Stewart twelve. Obviously, the Queen aimed at showing off Clarissa Strozzi and Miss Fleming without other rivals in the King's eyes. The King succumbed: he fell in love with Miss Fleming, and she bore him a son, Henri de Valois, Comte d'Angoulême, Grand Prior of France.

But Diane's influence and position remained unshaken. Like Madame de Pompadour later with Louis XV., the Duchesse de Valentinois was forgiving. But to what sort of love are we to ascribe this scheme on Catherine's part? Love of power or love of her husband? Women must decide.

A great deal is said in these days as to the licence of the press; but it is difficult to imagine to what a pitch

it was carried when printing was a new thing. Aretino, the Voltaire of his time, as is well known, made monarchs tremble, and foremost of them all Charles v. But few people know perhaps how far the audacity of pamphleteers could go. This Château of Chenonceaux had been given to Diane, nay, she was entreated to accept it, to induce her to overlook one of the most horrible publications ever hurled at a woman, one which shows how violent was the animosity between her and Madame d'Etampes. In 1537, when she was eight-and-thirty, a poet of Champagne, named Jean Voûté, published a collection of Latin verses, and among them three epigrams aimed at her. We must conclude that the poet was under high patronage from the fact that his volume is introduced by an *eulogium* written by Simon Macrin, the King's first Gentleman of the Bed-chamber. Here is the only passage quotable to-day from these epigrams, which bear the title: *In Pictaviam, anum aulicam.* (Against *la Poitiers*, an old woman of the Court.)

'Non trahit esca ficta prædam.'

'A painted bait catches no game,' says the poet, after telling her that she paints her face and buys her teeth and hair; and he goes on: 'Even if you could buy the finest essence that makes a woman, you would not get what you want of your lover, for you would need to be living, and you are dead.'

This volume, printed by Simon de Colines, was dedicated 'To a Bishop!'—To François Bohier, the brother of the man who, to save his credit at Court and atone for his crime, made an offering on the accession of Henri II. of the château of Chenonceaux, built by his father, Thomas Bohier, Councillor of State under four Kings: Louis XI., Charles VIII., Louis XII., and Francis I. What were the pamphlets published against Madame de Pompadour and Marie Antoinette in comparison with verses that might have been written by Martial! Voûté

must have come to a bad end. Thus the estate and château of Chenonceaux cost Diane nothing but the forgiveness of an offence—a duty enjoined by the Gospel. Not being assessed by a jury, the penalties inflicted on the Press were rather severer then than they are now.

The widowed Queens of France were required to remain for forty days in the King's bed-chamber, seeing no light but that of the tapers; they might not come out till after the funeral. This inviolable custom annoyed Catherine greatly; she was afraid of cabals. She found a way to evade it. The Cardinal de Lorraine coming out one morning—at such a time! at such a juncture!—from the house of 'the Fair Roman,' a famous courtesan of that day, who lived in the Rue Culture-Sainte-Catherine, was roughly handled by a party of roisterers. 'Whereat his Holiness was much amazed,' says Henri Estienne, 'and gave it out that heretics were lying in wait for him.'—And on this account the Court moved from Paris to Saint-Germain. The Queen would not leave the King her son behind, but took him with her.

The accession of François II., the moment when Catherine proposed to seize the reins of power, was a disappointment that formed a cruel climax to the twenty-six years of endurance she had already spent at the French Court. The Guises, with incredible audacity, at once usurped the sovereign power. The Duc de Guise was placed in command of the army, and the Connétable de Montmorency was shelved. The Cardinal took the control of the finances and the clergy.

Catherine's political career opened with one of those dramas which, though it was less notorious than some others, was not the less horrible, and initiated her no doubt into the agitating shocks of her life. Whether it was that Catherine, after vainly trying the most violent remedies, had thought she might bring the King back to her through jealousy; whether on coming to her second youth she had felt it hard never to have known

love, she had shown a warm interest in a gentleman of royal blood, François de Vendôme, son of Louis de Vendôme—the parent House of the Bourbons—the Vidame de Chartres, the name by which he is known to history. Catherine's covert hatred of Diane betrayed itself in many ways, which historians, studying only political developments, have failed to note with due attention. Catherine's attachment to the Vidame arose from an insult offered by the young man to the favourite. Diane looked for the most splendid matches for her daughters, who were indeed of the best blood in the kingdom. Above all, she was ambitious of an alliance with the Royal family. And her second daughter, who became the Duchesse d'Aumale, was proposed in marriage to the Vidame, whom Francis I., with sage policy, kept in poverty. For, in fact, when the Vidame de Chartres and the Prince de Condé first came to Court, Francis I. gave them appointments! What? the office of chamberlains in ordinary, with twelve hundred crowns a year, as much as he bestowed on the humblest of his gentlemen. And yet, though Diane offered him immense wealth, some high office under the Crown, and the King's personal favour, the Vidame refused. And then this Bourbon, factious as he was, married Jeanne, daughter of the Baron d'Estissac, by whom he had no children.

This proud demeanour naturally commended the Vidame to Catherine, who received him with marked favour, and made him her devoted friend. Historians have compared the last Duc de Montmorency, who was beheaded at Toulouse, with the Vidame de Chartres for his power of charming, his merits, and his talents.

Henri II. was not jealous; he did not apparently think it possible that a Queen of France could fail in her duty, or that a Medici could forget the honour done her by a Valois. When the Queen was said to be flirting with the Vidame de Chartres, she had been almost deserted by the King since the birth of her last child.

So this attempt came to nothing—as the King died wearing the colours of Diane de Poitiers.

So, at the King's death, Catherine was on terms of gallant familiarity with the Vidame, a state of things in no way out of harmony with the manners of the time, when love was at once so chivalrous and so licentious that the finest actions seemed as natural as the most blamable. But, as usual, historians have blundered by regarding exceptional cases as the rule.

Henri II.'s four sons nullified every pretension of the Bourbons, who were all miserably poor, and crushed under the scorn brought upon them by the Connétable de Montmorency's treason, in spite of the reasons which had led him to quit the country. The Vidame de Chartres, who was to the first Prince de Condé what Richelieu was to Mazarin, a father in politics, a model, and yet more a master in gallantry, hid the vast ambition of his family under a semblance of levity. Being unable to contend with the Guises, the Montmorencys, the Princes of Scotland, the Cardinals, and the Bouillons, he aimed at distinction by his gracious manners, his elegance, and his wit, which won him the favours of the most charming women, and the heart of many he never thought about. He was a man privileged by nature, whose fascinations were irresistible, and who owed to his love affairs the means of keeping up his rank. The Bourbons would not have taken offence, like Jarnac, at la Châtaignerie's scandal; they were very ready to accept lands and houses from their mistresses—witness the Prince de Condé, who had the estate of Saint-Valery from Madame la Maréchale de Saint-André.

During the first twenty days of mourning for Henri II., a sudden change came over the Vidame's prospects. Courted by the Queen-mother, and courting her as a man may court a queen, in the utmost secrecy, he seemed fated to play an important part; and Catherine, in fact, resolved to make him useful. The Prince received letters from her

to the Prince de Condé, in which she pointed out the necessity for a coalition against the Guises. The Guises, informed of this intrigue, made their way into the Queen's chamber to compel her to sign an order consigning the Vidame to the Bastille, and Catherine found herself under the cruel necessity of submitting. The Vidame died after a few months' captivity, on the day when he came out of prison, a short time before the Amboise conspiracy.

This was the end of Catherine de' Medici's first and only love affair. Protestant writers declared that the Queen had him poisoned to bury the secret of her gallantries in the tomb.

Such was this woman's apprenticeship to the exercise of royal power.

PART I

THE CALVINIST MARTYR

FEW persons in these days know how artless were the dwellings of the citizens of Paris in the sixteenth century, and how simple their lives. This very simplicity of habits and thought perhaps was the cause of the greatness of this primitive citizen class—for they were certainly great, free and noble, more so perhaps than the citizens of our time. Their history remains to be written; it requires and awaits a man of genius. Inspired by an incident which, though little known, forms the basis of this narrative, and is one of the most remarkable in the history of the citizen class, this reflection will no doubt occur to every one who shall read it to the end. Is it the first time in history that the conclusion has come before the facts?

In 1560, the houses of the Rue de la Vieille-Pelleterie lay close to the left bank of the Seine, between the Pont Notre-Dame and the Pont au Change. The public way and the houses occupied the ground now given up to the single path of the present quay. Each house, rising from the river, had a way down to it by stone or wooden steps, defended by strong iron gates, or doors of nail-studded timber. These houses, like those of Venice, had a door to the land and one to the water. At the moment of writing this sketch, only one house remains of this kind as a reminiscence of old Paris, and that is doomed soon to disappear; it stands at the corner

of the Petit-Pont, the little bridge facing the guard-house of the Hôtel-Dieu.

Of old each dwelling presented, on the river-side, the peculiar physiognomy stamped on it either by the trade and the habits of its owners, or by the eccentricity of the constructions devised by them for utilising or defiling the Seine. The bridges being built, and almost all choked up by more mills than were convenient for the requirements of navigation, the Seine in Paris was divided into as many pools as there were bridges. Some of these old Paris basins would have afforded delightful studies of colour for the painter. What a forest of timbers was built into the cross-beams that supported the mills, with their immense sails and wheels! What curious effects were to be found in the joists that shored up the houses from the river. Genre painting as yet, unfortunately, was not, and engraving in its infancy; so we have no record of the curious scenes which may still be found, on a small scale, in some provincial towns where the rivers are fringed with wooden houses, and where, as at Vendôme, for instance, the pools, overgrown with tall grasses, are divided by railings to separate the various properties on each bank.

The name of this street, which has now vanished from the map, sufficiently indicates the kind of business carried on there. At that time the merchants engaged in any particular trade, far from dispersing themselves about the city, gathered together for mutual protection. Being socially bound by the guild which limited their increase, they were also united into a brotherhood by the Church. This kept up prices. And then the masters were not at the mercy of their workmen, and did not yield, as they do now, to all their vagaries; on the contrary, they took charge of them, treated them as their children, and taught them the finer mysteries of their craft. A workman, to become a master, was required to produce a masterpiece—always an offering to the patron saint of the

guild. And will you venture to assert that the absence of competition diminished their sense of perfection, or hindered beauty of workmanship, when your admiration of the work of the older craftsmen has created the new trade of dealers in *bric-à-brac*?

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the fur trade was one of the most flourishing industries. The difficulty of obtaining furs, which, coming from the North, necessitated long and dangerous voyages, gave a high value to skins and furriers' work. Then, as now, high prices led to demand, for vanity knows no obstacles.

In France, and in other kingdoms, not only was the use of furs restricted by law to the great nobility, as is proved by the part played by ermine in ancient coats-of-arms; but certain rare furs, such as *vair*, which was beyond doubt imperial sable, might be worn only by kings, dukes, and men of high rank holding certain offices. *Vair* (a name still used in heraldry, *vair* and *counter vair*) was subdivided into *grand vair* and *menu vair*. The word has within the last hundred years fallen so completely into disuse, that in hundreds of editions of Perrault's fairy tales, Cinderella's famous slipper, probably of fur, *menu vair*, has become a glass slipper, *pantoufle de verre*. Not long since a distinguished French poet was obliged to restore and explain the original spelling of this word, for the edification of his brethren of the press, when giving an account of the 'Cenerentola,' in which a ring is substituted for the symbolical slipper—an unmeaning change.

The laws against the use of fur were, of course, perpetually transgressed, to the great advantage of the furriers. The high price of textiles and of furs made a garment in those days a durable thing, in keeipng with the furniture, armour, and general details of the sturdy life of the time. A nobleman or lady, every rich man as well as every citizen, possessed at most two dresses

for each season, and they lasted a lifetime or more. These articles were bequeathed to their children. Indeed, the clauses relating to weapons and raiment in marriage contracts, in these days unimportant by reason of the small value of clothes that are constantly renewed, were at that period of great interest. High prices had led to durability.

A lady's outfit represented a vast sum of money; it was included in her fortune, and safely bestowed in those enormous chests which endanger the ceilings of modern houses. The full dress of a lady in 1840 would have been the *déshabillé* of a fine lady of 1540. The discovery of America, the facility of transport, the destruction of social distinctions, which has led to the effacement of visible distinctions, have all contributed to reduce the furrier's craft to the low ebb at which it stands, almost to nothing. The article sold by a furrier at the same price as of old—say twenty livres—has fallen in value with the money: the livre or franc was then worth twenty of our present money. The citizen's wife or the courtesan who, in our day, trims her cloak with sable, does not know that in 1440 a malignant constable of the watch would have taken her forthwith into custody, and hailed her before the judge at le Châtelet. The English ladies who are so fond of ermine are unconscious of the fact that formerly none but queens, duchesses, and the Chancellor of France were permitted to wear this royal fur. There are at this day various ennobled families bearing the name of Pelletier or Lepelletier, whose forebears were obviously wealthy furriers; for most of our citizen names were originally surnames of that kind.

This digression not only explains the long squabbles as to precedence which the Drapers' Guild carried on for two centuries with the Mercers and the Furriers,

each insisting on marching first, as being the most important, but also accounts for the consequence of one Master Lecamus, a furrier honoured with the patronage of the two Queens, Catherine de' Medici and Mary Stewart, as well as that of the legal profession, who for twenty years had been the Syndic of his Corporation, and who lived in this street. The house occupied by Lecamus was one of the three forming the three corners of the cross-roads at the end of the Pont au Change, where only the tower now remains that formed the fourth corner. At the angle of this house, forming the corner of the bridge and of the quay, now called the Quai aux Fleurs, the architect had placed a niche for a Madonna, before whom tapers constantly burned, with posies of real flowers in their season, and artificial flowers in the winter.

On the side towards the Rue du Pont, as well as on that to the Rue de la Vieille-Pelleterie, the house was supported on wooden pillars. All the houses of the trading quarters were thus constructed, with an arcade beneath, where foot passengers walked under cover on a floor hardened by the mud they brought in, which made it a rather rough pavement. In all the towns of France these arcades have been called *piliers*—in England *rows* —a general term to which the name of a trade is commonly added, as 'Piliers des Halles,' 'Piliers de la Boucherie.' These covered ways, required by the changeable and rainy climate of Paris, gave the town a highly characteristic feature, but they have entirely disappeared. Just as there now remains one house only on the river-bank, so no more than about a hundred feet are left of the old *Piliers* in the market, the last that have survived till now; and in a few days this remnant of the gloomy labyrinth of old Paris will also be destroyed. The existence of these relics of the Middle Ages is, no doubt, incompatible with the splendour of modern Paris. And these remarks are not

intended as a lament over those fragments of the old city, but as a verification of this picture by the last surviving examples now falling into dust, and to win forgiveness for such descriptions, which will be precious in the future which is following hard on the heels of this age.

The walls were of timber covered with slates. The spaces between the timbers had been filled up with bricks, in a way that may still be seen in some provincial towns, laid in a zigzag pattern known as *Point de Hongrie*. The window-sills and lintels, also of wood, were handsomely carved, as were the corner tabernacle above the Madonna, and the pillars in front of the shop. Every window, every beam dividing the stories, was graced with arabesques of fantastic figures and animals wreathed in scrolls of foliage. On the street side, as on the river side, the house was crowned with a high-pitched roof having a gable to the river and one to the street. This roof, like that of a Swiss chalet, projected far enough to cover a balcony on the second floor, with an ornamental balustrade; here the mistress might walk under shelter and command a view of the street, or of the pool shut in between two bridges and two rows of houses.

Houses by the river were at that time highly valued. The system of drainage and water supply was not yet invented; the only main drain was one round Paris, constructed by Aubriot, the first man of genius and determination who—in the time of Charles v.—thought of sanitation for Paris. Houses situated like this of the Sieur Lecamus found in the river a necessary water-supply, and a natural outlet for rain water and waste. The vast works of this kind under the direction of the Trade Provosts are only now disappearing. None but octogenarians can still remember having seen the pits which swallowed up the surface waters, in the Rue Montmartre, Rue du Temple, etc. These hideous

yawning culverts were in their day of inestimable utility. Their place will probably be for ever marked by the sudden rising of the roadway over what was their open channel—another archæological detail which, in a couple of centuries, the historian will find inexplicable.

One day, in 1816, a little girl, who had been sent to an actress at the Ambigu with some diamonds for the part of a queen, was caught in a storm, and so irresistibly swept away by the waters to the opening of the drain in the Rue du Temple, that she would have been drowned in it but for the help of a passer-by, who was touched by her cries. But she had dropped the jewels, which were found in a man-hole. This accident made a great commotion, and gave weight to the demands for the closing of these gulfs for swallowing water and little girls. These curious structures, five feet high, had more or less movable gratings, which led to the flooding of cellars when the stream produced by heavy rain was checked by the grating being choked with rubbish, which the residents often forgot to remove.

The front of Master Lecamus' shop was a large window, but filled in with small panes of leaded glass, which made the place very dark. The furs for wealthy purchasers were carried to them for inspection. To those who came to buy in the shop, the goods were displayed outside between the pillars, which, during the day, were always more or less blocked by tables and salesmen sitting on stools, as they could still be seen doing under the arcade of the Halles some fifteen years since. From these outposts the clerks, apprentices, and sewing girls could chat, question, and answer each other, and hail the passer-by in a way which Walter Scott has depicted in the *Fortunes of Nigel*. The signboard, representing an ermine, was hung out as we still see those of village inns, swinging from a handsome arm of pierced

and gilt ironwork. Over the ermine were these words :—

LECAMUS
Furrier
To Her Majesty the Queen and the King our Sovereign Lord

On one side, and on the other :—

'To Her Majesty the Queen Mother
And to the Gentlemen of the Parlement.'

The words 'To Her Majesty the Queen' had been lately added ; the gilt letters were new. This addition was a consequence of the recent changes produced by Henri II.'s sudden and violent death, which overthrew many fortunes at Court, and began that of the Guises.

The back shop looked over the river. In this room sat the worthy citizen and his wife, Mademoiselle Lecamus. The wife of a man who was not noble had not at that time any right to the title of Dame, or lady ; but the wives of the citizens of Paris were allowed to call themselves Demoiselle (as we might say Mistress), as part of the privileges granted and confirmed to their husbands by many kings to whom they had rendered great services. Between this back room and the front shop was a spiral ladder or staircase of wood, a sort of corkscrew leading up to the next story, where the furs were stored, to the old couple's bedroom, and again to the attics, lighted by dormer windows, where their children slept, the maid-servant, the clerks, and the apprentices.

This herding of families, servants, and apprentices, and the small space allotted to each in the dwelling, where the apprentices all slept in one large room under the tiles, accounts for the enormous population at that time crowded together in Paris on a tenth of the ground

now occupied by the city, and also for the many curious details of mediæval life, and the cunning love affairs, though these, *pace* the grave historian, are nowhere recorded but by the story writers, and without them would have been lost.

At this time a grand gentleman—such as the Admiral de Coligny, for instance—had three rooms for himself in Paris, and his people lived in a neighbouring hostelry. There were not fifty mansions in all Paris, not fifty palaces, that is to say, belonging to the sovereign princes or great vassals, whose existence was far superior to that of the greatest German rulers, such as the Duke of Bavaria or the Elector of Saxony.

The kitchen in the Lecamus' house was on the river-side below the back shop. It had a glass door opening on to an ironwork balcony, where the cook could stand to draw up water in a pail and to wash the household linen. Thus the back shop was at once the sitting-room, the dining-room, and the counting-house. It was in this important room—always fitted with richly carved wood, and adorned by some chest or artistic article of furniture—that the merchant spent most of his life; there he had jolly suppers after his day's work; there were held secret debates on the political interests of the citizens and the Royal family. The formidable guilds of Paris could at that time arm a hundred thousand men. Their resolutions were stoutly upheld by their serving-men, their clerks, their apprentices, and their workmen. Their Provost was their commander-in-chief, and they had, in the Hôtel de Ville, a palace where they had a right to assemble.

In that famous 'citizens' parlour' (*parlouer aux bourgeois*) very solemn decisions were taken. But for the continual sacrifices which had made war unendurable to the Guilds, wearied out with losses and famine, Henri IV., a rebel-made king, might never have entered Paris.

Every reader may now imagine for himself the char-

acteristic appearance of this corner of Paris where the bridge and the quay now open out, where the trees rise from the Quai aux Fleurs, and where nothing is left of the past but the lofty and famous clock-tower whence the signal was tolled for the Massacre of Saint-Bartholomew. Strange coincidence! One of the houses built round the foot of that tower—at that time surrounded by wooden shops—the house of the Lecamus, was to be the scene of one of the incidents that led to that night of horrors, which proved, unfortunately, propitious rather than fatal to Calvinism.

At the moment when this story begins, the audacity of the new religious teaching was setting Paris by the ears. A Scotchman, named Stewart, had just assassinated President Minard, that member of the Parlement to whom public opinion attributed a principal share in the execution of Anne du Bourg, a councillor burnt on the Place de Grève after the tailor of the late King, who had been tortured in the presence of Henri II. and Diane de Poitiers. Paris was so closely watched, that the archers on guard compelled every passer-by to pray to the Virgin, in order to detect heretics, who yielded unwillingly, or even refused to perform an act opposed to their convictions.

The two archers on guard at the corner of the Lecamus' house had just gone off duty; thus Christophe, the furrier's son, strongly suspected of deserting the Catholic faith, had been able to go out without fear of being compelled to adore the Virgin's image. At seven in the evening of an April day, 1560, night was falling, and the apprentices, seeing only a few persons walking along the arcades on each side of the street, were carrying in the goods laid out for inspection preparatory to closing the house and the shop. Christophe Lecamus, an ardent youth of two-and-twenty, was standing in the door, apparently engaged in looking after the apprentices.

'Monsieur,' said one of these lads to Christophe, pointing out a man who was pacing to and fro under the arcade with a doubtful expression, 'that is probably a spy or a thief, but whatever he is, such a lean wretch cannot be an honest man. If he wanted to speak to us on business, he would come up boldly instead of creeping up and down as he is doing.—And what a face!' he went on, mimicking the stranger, 'with his nose hidden in his cloak! What a jaundiced eye, and what a starved complexion!'

As soon as the stranger thus described saw Christophe standing alone in the doorway, he hastily crossed from the opposite arcade where he was walking, came under the pillars of the Lecamus' house, and passing along by the shop before the apprentices had come out again to close the shutters, he went up to the young man.

'I am Chaudieu!' he said in a low voice.

On hearing the name of one of the most famous ministers, and one of the most heroic actors in the terrible drama called the Reformation, Christophe felt such a thrill as a faithful peasant would have felt on recognising his King under a disguise.

'Would you like to see some furs?' said Christophe, to deceive the apprentices whom he heard behind him. 'Though it is almost dark, I can show you some myself.'

He invited the minister to enter, but the man replied that he would rather speak to him out of doors. Christophe fetched his cap and followed the Calvinist.

Chaudieu, though banished by an edict, as secret plenipotentiary of Théodore de Bèze and Calvin—who directed the Reformation in France from Geneva—went and came, defying the risk of the horrible death inflicted by the Parlement, in concert with the Church and the Monarch, on a leading reformer, the famous Anne du Bourg. This man, whose brother was a captain in the army, and one of Admiral Coligny's best warriors, was the arm used by Calvin to stir up France at the begin-

ning of the twenty-two years of religious wars which were on the eve of an outbreak. This preacher of the reformed faith was one of those secret wheels which may best explain the immense spread of the Reformation.

Chaudieu led Christophe down to the edge of the water by an underground passage like that of the Arche Marion, filled in some ten years since. This tunnel between the house of Lecamus and that next it ran under the Rue de la Vieille-Pelleterie, and was known as le Pont aux Fourreurs. It was used by the dyers of the Cité as a way down to the river to wash their thread, silk, and materials. A little boat lay there, held and rowed by one man. In the bows sat a stranger, a small man, and very simply dressed. In an instant the boat was in the middle of the river, and the boatman steered it under one of the wooden arches of the Pont au Change, where he quickly secured it to an iron ring. No one had said a word.

'Here we may talk in safety, there are neither spies nor traitors,' said Chaudieu to the two others. 'Are you filled with the spirit of self-sacrifice that should animate a martyr? Are you ready to suffer all things for our holy Cause? Do you fear the torments endured by the late King's tailor, and the Councillor du Bourg, which of a truth await us all?' He spoke to Christophe, looking at him with a radiant face.

'I will testify to the Gospel,' replied Christophe simply, looking up at the windows of the back shop.

The familiar lamp standing on a table, where his father was no doubt balancing his books, reminded him by its mild beam of the peaceful life and family joys he was renouncing. It was a brief but complete vision. The young man's fancy took in the homely harmony of the whole scene—the places where he had spent his happy childhood, where Babette Lallier lived, his future wife, where everything promised him a calm and busy

life ; he saw the past, he saw the future, and he sacrificed it all. At any rate, he staked it.

Such were men in those days.

'We need say no more,' cried the impetuous boatman. 'We know him for one of the saints. If the Scotchman had not dealt the blow, he would have killed the infamous Minard.'

'Yes,' said Lecamus, 'my life is in the hands of the brethren, and I devote it with joy for the success of the Reformation. I have thought of it all seriously. I know what we are doing for the joy of the nations. In two words, the Papacy makes for celibacy, the Reformation makes for the family. It is time to purge France of its monks, to restore their possessions to the Crown, which will sell them sooner or later to the middle classes. Let us show that we can die for our children, and to make our families free and happy!'

The young enthusiast's face, with Chaudieu's, the boatman's, and that of the stranger seated in the bows, formed a picture that deserves to be described, all the more so because such a description entails the whole history of that epoch, if it be true that it is given to some men to sum up in themselves the spirit of their age.

Religious reform, attempted in Germany by Luther, in Scotland by John Knox, and in France by Calvin, found partisans chiefly among those of the lower classes who had begun to think. The great nobles encouraged the movement only to serve other interests quite foreign to the religious question. These parties were joined by adventurers, by gentlemen who had lost all, by youngsters to whom every form of excitement was acceptable. But among the artisans and men employed in trade, faith was genuine, and founded on intelligent interests. The poorer nations at once gave their adherence to a religion which brought the property of the Church back to the State, which suppressed the convents, and deprived

the dignitaries of the Church of their enormous revenues. Everybody in trade calculated the profits from this religious transaction, and devoted themselves to it body, soul, and purse; and among the youth of the French citizen class, the new preaching met that noble disposition for self-sacrifice of every kind which animates the young to whom egoism is unknown.

Eminent men, penetrating minds, such as are always to be found among the masses, foresaw the Republic in the Reformation, and hoped to establish throughout Europe a form of government like that of the United Netherlands, which at last triumphed over the greatest power of the time—Spain, ruled by Philip II., and represented in the Low Countries by the Duke of Alva. Jean Hotoman was at that time planning the famous book in which this scheme is set forth, which diffused through France the leaven of these ideas, stirred up once more by the League, subdued by Richelieu, and afterwards by Louis XIV., to reappear with the Economists and the Encyclopedists under Louis XV., and burst into life under Louis XVI.; ideas which were always approved by the younger branches, by the House of Orléans in 1789, as by the House of Bourbon in 1589.

The questioning spirit is the rebellious spirit. A rebellion is always either a cloak to hide a prince, or the swaddling wrapper of a new rule. The House of Bourbon, a younger branch than the Valois, was busy at the bottom of the Reformation. At the moment when the little boat lay moored under the arch of the Pont au Change, the question was further complicated by the ambition of the Guises, the rivals of the Bourbons. Indeed, the Crown as represented by Catherine de' Medici could, for thirty years, hold its own in the strife by setting these two factions against each other; whereas later, instead of being clutched at by many hands, the Crown stood face to face with the people without a barrier between; for Richelieu and Louis XIV. had broken down the nobility,

and Louis xv. had overthrown the Parlements. Now a king alone face to face with a nation, as Louis xvi. was, must inevitably succumb.

Christophe Lecamus was very typical of the ardent and devoted sons of the people. His pale complexion had that warm burnt hue which is seen in some fair people; his hair was of a coppery yellow; his eyes were bluish-grey, and sparkled brightly. In them alone was his noble soul visible, for his clumsy features did not disguise the somewhat triangular shape of a plain face by lending it the look of dignity which a man of rank can assume, and his forehead was low, and characteristic only of great energy. His vitality seemed to be seated no lower down than his chest, which was somewhat hollow. Sinewy, rather than muscular, Christophe was of tough texture, lean but wiry. His sharp nose showed homely cunning, and his countenance revealed intelligence of the kind that acts wisely on one point of a circle, but that has not the power of commanding the whole circumference. His eyes, set under brows that projected like a pent-house, and faintly outlined with light down, were surrounded with broad light-blue circles, with a sheeny white patch at the root of the nose, almost always a sign of great excitability. Christophe was of the people —the race that fights and allows itself to be deceived; intelligent enough to understand and to serve an idea, too noble to take advantage of it, too magnanimous to sell himself.

By the side of old Lecamus' only son, Chaudieu, the ardent minister, lean from watchfulness, with brown hair, a yellow skin, a contumacious brow, an eloquent mouth, fiery hazel eyes, and a short rounded chin, symbolised that Christian zeal which gave the Reformation so many fanatical and earnest preachers, whose spirit and boldness fired whole communities. This aide-de-camp of Calvin and Théodore de Bèze contrasted well with the furrier's son. He represented the living

cause of which Christophe was the effect. You could not have conceived of the active firebrand of the popular machine under any other aspect.

The boatman, an impetuous creature, tanned by the open air, the dews of night, and the heats of the day, with firmly set lips, quick motions, a hungry, tawny eye like a vulture's, and crisp black hair, was the characteristic adventurer who risks his all in an undertaking as a gambler stakes his whole fortune on a card. Everything in the man spoke of terrible passions and a daring that would flinch at nothing. His quivering muscles were as able to keep silence as to speak. His look was assertive rather than noble. His nose, upturned but narrow, scented battle. He seemed active and adroit. In any age you would have known him for a party leader. He might have been Pizarro, Hernando Cortez, or Morgan the Destroyer if there had been no Reformation—a doer of violent deeds.

The stranger who sat on a seat, wrapped in his cloak, evidently belonged to the highest social rank. The fineness of his linen, the cut, material, and perfume of his raiment, the make and texture of his gloves, showed a man of the Court, as his attitude, his haughtiness, his cool demeanour, and his flashing eye revealed a man of war. His appearance was at first somewhat alarming, and inspired respect. We respect a man who respects himself. Though short and hunchbacked, his manner made good all the defects of his figure. The ice once broken, he had the cheerfulness of decisiveness and an indescribable spirit of energy which made him attractive. He had the blue eyes and the hooked nose of the House of Navarre, and the Spanish look of the marked physiognomy that was characteristic of the Bourbon kings.

With three words the scene became of the greatest interest.

'Well, then,' said Chaudieu, as Christophe Lecamus made his profession of faith, 'this boatman is la Renaudie;

and this is Monseigneur the Prince de Condé,' he added, turning to the hunchback.

Thus the four men were representative of the faith of the people, the intellect of eloquence, the arm of the soldier, and Royalty cast into the shade.

'You will hear what we require of you,' the minister went on, after allowing a pause for the young man's astonishment. 'To the end that you may make no mistakes, we are compelled to initiate you into the most important secrets of the Reformation.'

The Prince and la Renaudie assented by a gesture, when the minister ceased speaking, to allow the Prince to say something if he should wish it. Like all men of rank engaged in conspiracies, who make it a principle not to appear before some critical moment, the Prince kept silence. Not from cowardice: at such junctures he was the soul of the scheme, shrank from no danger, and risked his head; but with a sort of royal dignity, he left the explanation of the enterprise to the preacher, and was content to study the new instrument he was compelled to make use of.

'My son,' said Chaudieu in Huguenot phraseology, 'we are about to fight the first battle against the Roman whore. In a few days our soldiers must perish at the stake, or the Guises must be dead. So, ere long, the King and the two Queens will be in our power. This is the first appeal to arms by our religion in France, and France will not lay them down till she has conquered—it is of the nation that I speak, and not of the kingdom. Most of the nobles of the kingdom see what the Cardinal de Lorraine and the Duke his brother are driving at. Under pretence of defending the Catholic faith, the House of Lorraine claims the Crown of France as its inheritance. It leans on the Church, and has made it a formidable ally; the monks are its supporters, its acolytes and spies. It asserts itself as a protector of the throne it hopes to usurp, of the Valois whom it hopes to destroy.

'We have decided to rise up in arms, and it is because the liberties of the people are threatened as well as the interests of the nobility. We must stifle in its infancy a faction as atrocious as that of the Bourguignons, who of old put Paris and France to fire and sword. A Louis XI. was needed to end the quarrel between the Burgundians and the Crown, but now a Prince of Condé will prevent the Lorrains from going too far. This is not a civil war; it is a duel between the Guises and the Reformation—a duel to the death! We will see their heads laid low, or they shall crush ours!'

'Well spoken!' said the Prince.

'In these circumstances, Christophe,' la Renaudie put in, 'we must neglect no means of strengthening our party—for there is a party on the side of the Reformation, the party of offended rights, of the nobles who are sacrificed to the Guises, of the old army leaders so shamefully tricked at Fontainebleau, whence the Cardinal banished them by erecting gibbets to hang those who should ask the King for the price of their outfit and arrears of pay.'

'Yes, my son,' said Chaudieu, seeing some signs of terror in Christophe, 'that is what requires us to triumph by fighting instead of triumphing by conviction and martyrdom. The Queen-mother is ready to enter into our views; not that she is prepared to abjure the Catholic faith—she has not got so far as that, but she may perhaps be driven to it by our success. Be that as it may, humiliated and desperate as she is at seeing the power she had hoped to wield at the King's death in the grasp of the Guises, and alarmed by the influence exerted by the young Queen Marie, who is their niece and partisan, Queen Catherine will be inclined to lend her support to the princes and nobles who are about to strike a blow for her deliverance. At this moment, though apparently devoted to the Guises, she hates them, longs for their ruin, and will make use of us to oppose

them; but Monseigneur can make use of her to oppose all the others. The Queen-mother will consent to all we propose. We have the Connétable on our side—Monseigneur has just seen him at Chantilly, but he will not stir without orders from his superiors. Being Monseigneur's uncle, he will not leave us in the lurch, and our generous Prince will not hesitate to rush into danger to enlist Anne de Montmorency.

'Everything is ready; and we have cast our eyes on you to communicate to Queen Catherine our treaty of alliance, our schemes for edicts, and the basis of the new rule. The Court is at Blois. Many of our friends are there; but those are our future chiefs——and, like Monseigneur,' and he bowed to the Prince, 'they must never be suspected; we must sacrifice ourselves for them. The Queen-mother and our friends are under such close espionage, that it is impossible to communicate with them through any one who is known, or of any consequence. Such a person would at once be suspected, and would never be admitted to speak with Madame Catherine. God should indeed give us at this moment the shepherd David with his sling to attack Goliath de Guise. Your father—a good Catholic, more's the pity—is furrier to the two Queens; he always has some garment or trimming in hand for them; persuade him to send you to the Court. You will arouse no suspicions, and will not compromise Queen Catherine. Any one of our leaders might lose his head for an imprudence which should give rise to a suspicion of the Queen-mother's connivance with us. But where a man of importance, once caught out, gives a clue to suspicions, a nobody like you escapes scot-free.—You see! The Guises have so many spies, that nowhere but in the middle of the river can we talk without fear. So you, my son, are like a man on guard, doomed to die at his post. Understand, if you are taken, you are abandoned by us all. If need be, we shall cast opprobrium and disgrace on you.

If we should be forced to it, we should declare that you were a creature of the Guises whom they sent to play a part to implicate us. So what we ask of you is entire self-sacrifice.

'If you perish,' said the Prince de Condé, 'I pledge my word as a gentleman that your family shall be a sacred trust to the House of Navarre; I will bear it in my heart and serve it in every way.'

'That word, my Lord, is enough,' replied Christophe, forgetting that this leader of faction was a Gascon. 'We live in times when every man, prince or citizen, must do his duty.'

'That is a true Huguenot! If all our men were like him,' said la Renaudie, laying his hand on Christophe's shoulder, 'we should have won by to-morrow.'

'Young man,' said the Prince, 'I meant to show you that while Chaudieu preaches and the gentleman bears arms, the prince fights. Thus, in so fierce a game every stake has its value.'

'Listen,' said la Renaudie; 'I will not give you the papers till we reach Beaugency, for we must run no risks on the road. You will find me on the quay there; my face, voice, and clothes will be so different, that you may not recognise me. But I will say to you, "Are you a *Guépin*?" and you must reply, "At your service."—As to the manner of proceeding, I will tell you. You will find a horse at *la Pinte fleurie*, near Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois. Ask there for Jean le Breton, who will take you to the stable and mount you on a nag of mine known to cover thirty leagues in eight hours. Leave Paris by the Bussy Gate. Breton has a pass for me; take it for yourself and be off, riding round outside the towns. You should reach Orleans by daybreak.'

'And the horse?' asked Lecamus.

'He will hold out till you get to Orleans,' replied la Renaudie. 'Leave him outside the suburb of Bannier, for the gates are well guarded; we must not arouse

suspicion. You, my friend, must play your part well. You must make up any story that may seem to you best to enable you to go to the third house on your left on entering Orleans; it is that of one Tourillon, a glover. Knock three raps on the door and call out, "In the service of Messieurs de Guise!" The man affects to be a fanatical *Guisard*; we four only know that he is on our side. He will find you a boatman, such another as himself of course, but devoted to our cause. Go down to the river at once, get into a boat painted green with a white border. You ought to be at Beaugency by noonday to-morrow. There I will put you in the way of getting a boat to carry you down to Blois without running any danger. Our enemies the Guises do not command the Loire, only the river-ports.

'You may thus see the Queen in the course of to-morrow or of the next day.'

'Your words are graven here,' said Christophe, touching his forehead.

Chaudieu embraced his son with religious fervency; he was proud of him.

'The Lord protect you!' he said, pointing to the sunset which crimsoned the old roofs covered with shingles, and shot fiery gleams among the forest of beams round which the waters foamed.

'You are of the stock of old Jacques Bonhomme,' said la Renaudie to Christophe, wringing his hand.

'We shall meet again, *Monsieur*,' said the Prince, with a gesture of infinite graciousness, almost of friendliness.

With a stroke of the oar, la Renaudie carried the young conspirator back to the steps leading up to the house, and the boat vanished at once under the arches of the Pont au Change.

Christophe shook the iron gate that closed the entrance from the river-side and called out; Mademoiselle Lecamus heard him, opened one of the windows of the back-shop,

and asked how he came there. Christophe replied that he was half-frozen, and that she must first let him in.

'Young master,' said la Bourguignonne, 'you went out by the street door and come in by the river-gate? Your father will be in a pretty rage.'

Christophe, bewildered by the secret conference which had brought him into contact with the Prince de Condé, la Renaudie, and Chaudieu, and even more agitated by the expected turmoil of an imminent civil war, made no reply; he hurried up from the kitchen to the back-shop. There, on seeing him, his mother, who was a bigoted old Catholic, could not contain herself.

'I will wager,' she broke out, 'that the three men you were talking to were ref——'

'Silence, wife,' said the prudent old man, whose white head was bent over a book. 'Now, you lazy oafs,' he went on to three boys who had long since finished supper, 'what are you waiting for to take you to bed? It is eight o'clock. You must be up by five in the morning. And first you have the Président de Thou's robes and cap to carry home. Go all three together, and carry sticks and rapiers. If you meet any more ne'er-do-weels of your own kidney, at any rate there will be three of you.'

'And are we to carry the ermine surcoat ordered by the young Queen, which is to be delivered at the Hôtel de Soissons, from whence there is an express to Blois and to the Queen-mother?' asked one of the lads.

'No,' said the Syndic; 'Queen Catherine's account amounts to three thousand crowns, and I must get the money. I think I will go to Blois myself.'

'I should not think of allowing you, at your age, Father, and in such times as these, to expose yourself on the high roads. I am two-and-twenty; you may send me on this errand,' said Christophe, with an eye on a box which he had no doubt contained the surcoat.

'Are you glued to the bench?' cried the old man to

the apprentices, who hastily took up their rapiers and capes, and Monsieur de Thou's fur gown.

This illustrious man was to be received on the morrow by the Parlement as their President; he had just signed the death-warrant of the Councillor du Bourg, and was fated, before the year was out, to sit in judgment on the Prince de Condé.

'La Bourguignonne,' said the old man, 'go and ask my neighbour Lallier if he will sup with us this evening, furnishing the wine; we will give the meal.—And, above all, tell him to bring his daughter.'

The Syndic of the Guild of Furriers was a handsome old man of sixty, with white hair and a broad high forehead. As furrier to the Court for forty years past, he had witnessed all the revolutions in the reign of Francis I., and had retained his royal patent in spite of feminine rivalries. He had seen the arrival at Court of Catherine de' Medici, then but just fifteen; he had seen her succumb to the Duchesse d'Etampes, her father-in-law's mistress, and to the Duchesse de Valentinois, mistress to the late King, her husband. But through all these changes the furrier had got into no difficulties, though the Court purveyors often fell into disgrace with the ladies they served. His prudence was as great as his wealth. He maintained an attitude of excessive humility. Pride had never caught him in its snares. The man was so modest, so meek, so obliging, so poor—at Court and in the presence of queens, princesses, and favourites—that his servility had saved his shop-sign.

Such a line of policy betrayed, of course, a cunning and clear-sighted man. Humble as he was to the outer world, at home he was a despot. He was the unquestioned master in his own house. He was highly respected by his fellow merchants, and derived immense consideration from his long tenure of the first place in business. Indeed, he was gladly helpful to others;

and among the services he had done, the most important perhaps was the support he had long afforded to the most famous surgeon of the sixteenth century — Ambroise Paré, who owed it to Lecamus that he could pursue his studies. In all the disputes that arose between the merchants of the guild, Lecamus was for conciliatory measures. Thus general esteem had confirmed his supremacy among his equals, while his assumed character had preserved him the favour of the Court.

Having, for political reasons, manœuvred in his parish for the glory of his trade, he did what was needful to keep himself in a sufficient odour of sanctity with the priest of the Church of Saint-Pierre aux Bœufs, who regarded him as one of the men most devoted in all Paris to the Catholic faith. Consequently, when the States-General were convoked, Lecamus was unanimously elected to represent the third estate by the influence of the priests, which was at that time enormous in Paris.

This old man was one of those deep and silent ambitious men who for fifty years are submissive to everybody in turn, creeping up from place to place, no one knowing how, till they are seen peacefully seated in a position which no one, not even the boldest, would have dared to admit was the goal of his ambition at the beginning of his life—so long was the climb, so many gulfs were there to leap, into which he might fall! Lecamus, who had hidden away a large fortune, would run no risks, and was planning a splendid future for his son. Instead of that personal ambition which often sacrifices the future to the present, he had family ambition, a feeling that seems lost in these days, smothered by the stupid regulation of inheritance by law. Lecamus foresaw himself President of the Paris Parlement in the person of his grandson.

Christophe, the godson of the great historian de Thou, had received an excellent education, but it had led him to scepticism and inquiry, which indeed were

increasing apace among the students and Faculties of the University. Christophe was at present studying for the bar, the first step to a judgeship. The old furrier pretended to be undecided as to his son's career; sometimes he would make Christophe his successor, and sometimes he would have him a pleader; but in his heart he longed to see this son in the seat of a Councillor of the Parlement. The furrier longed to place the house of Lecamus on a par with the old and honoured families of Paris citizens which had produced a Pasquier, a Molé, a Miron, a Séguier, Lamoignon, du Tillet, Lecoigneux, Lescalopier, the Goix, the Arnaulds,—all the famous sheriffs and high-provosts of corporations who had rallied to defend the throne.

To the end that Christophe might in that day do credit to his rank, he wanted him to marry the daughter of the richest goldsmith in the Cité, his neighbour Lallier, whose nephew, at a later day, presented the keys of Paris to Henri IV. The most deeply rooted purpose in the good man's heart was to spend half his own fortune and half of Lallier's in the purchase of a lordly estate, a long and difficult matter in those days.

But he was too deep a schemer, and knew the times too well, to overlook the great movements that were being hatched; he saw plainly, and saw truly, when he looked forward to the division of the kingdom into two camps. The useless executions on the Place de l'Estrapade, that of Henry II.'s tailor, and that, still more recent, of the Councillor Anne du Bourg, besides the connivance of the reigning favourite in the time of Francis I., and of many nobles now, at the progress of reform, all were alarming indications. The furrier was determined, come what might, to remain faithful to the Church, the Monarchy, and the Parlement, but he was secretly well content that his son should join the Reformation. He knew that he had wealth enough to ransom Christophe if the lad should ever compromise

himself seriously; and then, if France should turn Calvinist, his son could save the family in any furious outbreaks in the capital such as the citizens could vividly remember, and as would recur again and again through four reigns.

Like Louis XI., the old furrier never confessed these thoughts even to himself; his cunning completely deceived his wife and his son. For many a day this solemn personage had been the recognised head of the most populous quarter of Paris—the heart of the city—bearing the title of *Quartenier*, which became notorious fifteen years later. Clothed in cloth, like every prudent citizen who obeyed the sumptuary laws, Master Lecamus—the Sieur Lecamus, a title he held in virtue of an edict of Charles V. permitting the citizens of Paris to purchase *Seigneuries*, and their wives to assume the fine title of *demoiselle* or mistress—wore no gold chain, no silk; only a stout doublet with large buttons of blackened silver, wrinkled hose drawn up above his knee, and leather shoes with buckles. His shirt, of fine linen, was pulled out, in the fashion of the time, into full puffs through his half-buttoned waistcoat and slashed trunks.

Though the full light of the lamp fell on the old man's broad and handsome head, Christophe had no inkling of the thoughts hidden behind that rich Dutch-looking complexion; still he understood that his old father meant to take some advantage of his affection for pretty Babette Lallier. And Christophe, as a man who has laid his own schemes, smiled sadly when he heard the invitation sent to his fair mistress.

As soon as la Bourguignonne and the apprentices were gone, old Lecamus looked at his wife with an expression that fully showed his firm and resolute temper.

'You will never rest till you have got the boy hanged with your damned tongue!' said he in stern tones.

'I would rather see him hanged, but saved, than alive

and a Huguenot,' was the gloomy reply. 'To think that the child I bore within me for nine months should not be a good Catholic, but hanker after the heresies of Colas—that he must spend all eternity in hell——!' and she began to cry.

'You old fool!' said the furrier, 'then give him a chance of life, if only to convert him! Why, you said a thing, before the apprentices, which might set our house on fire, and roast us all in it like fleas in straw.'

The mother crossed herself, but said nothing.

'As for you,' said the good man, with a scrutinising look at his son, 'tell me what you were doing out there on the water with—— Come close to me while I speak to you,' he added, seizing his son by the arm, and drawing him close to him while he whispered in the lad's ear—'with the Prince de Condé.' Christophe started. 'Do you suppose that the Court furrier does not know all their faces? And do you fancy that I am not aware of what is going on? Monseigneur the Grand Master has ordered out troops to Amboise. And when troops are removed from Paris to Amboise while the Court is at Blois, when they are marched by way of Chartres and Vendôme instead of by Orleans, the meaning is pretty clear, heh? Trouble is brewing.

'If the Queens want their surcoats, they will send for them. The Prince de Condé may be intending to kill Messieurs de Guise, who on their part mean to get rid of him perhaps. Of what use can a furrier's son be in such a broil? When you are married, when you are a pleader in the Parlement, you will be as cautious as your father. A furrier's son has no business to be of the new religion till all the rest of the world is. I say nothing against the Reformers; it is no business of mine; but the Court is Catholic, the two Queens are Catholic, the Parlement is Catholic: we serve them with furs, and we must be Catholic.

'You do not stir from here, Christophe, or I will

place you with your godfather the Président de Thou, who will keep you at it, blackening paper night and day, instead of leaving you to blacken your soul in the hell-broth of these damned Genevese.'

'Father,' said Christophe, leaning on the back of the old man's chair, 'send me off to Blois with Queen Marie's surcoat, and to ask for the money, or I am a lost man. And you love me——'

'Lost!' echoed his father, without any sign of surprise. 'If you stay here, you will not be lost. I shall know where to find you.'

'I shall be killed.'

'Why?'

'The most zealous Huguenots have cast their eyes on me to serve them in a certain matter, and if I fail to do what I have just promised, they will kill me in the street, in the face of day, here, as Minard was killed. But if you send me to the Court on business of your own, I shall probably be able to justify my action to both parties. Either I shall succeed for them without running any risk, and so gain a good position in the party; or, if the danger is too great, I can do your business only.'

The old man started to his feet as if his seat were of red-hot iron.

'Wife,' said he, 'leave us, and see that no one intrudes on Christophe and me.'

When Mistress Lecamus had left the room, the furrier took his son by a button and led him to the corner of the room which formed the angle towards the bridge.

'Christophe,' said he, quite into his son's ear, as he had just now spoken of the Prince de Condé, 'be a Huguenot if that is your pet vice, but with prudence, in your secret heart, and not in such a way as to be pointed at by every one in the neighbourhood. What you have just told me shows me what confidence the

leaders have in you.—What are you to do at the Court?'

'I cannot tell you,' said Christophe; 'I do not quite know that myself yet.'

'H'm, h'm,' said the old man, looking at the lad, 'the young rascal wants to hoodwink his father. He will go far!—Well, well,' he went on, in an undertone, 'you are not going to Blois to make overtures to the Guises, nor to the little King our Sovereign, nor to little Queen Mary. All these are Catholics; but I could swear that the Italian Queen owes the Scotch woman and the Lorrains some grudge: I know her. She has been dying to put a finger in the pie. The late King was so much afraid of her that, like the jewellers, he used diamond to cut diamond, one woman against another. Hence Queen Catherine's hatred of the poor Duchesse de Valentinois, from whom she took the fine Château of Chenonceaux. But for Monsieur le Connétable, the Duchess would have had her neck wrung at least——

'Hands off, my boy! Do not trust yourself within reach of the Italian woman, whose only passions are in her head; a bad sort that.—Ay, the business you are sent to the Court to do will give you a bad headache, I fear,' cried the father, seeing that Christophe was about to speak. 'My boy, I have two schemes for your future life; you will not spoil them by being of service to Queen Catherine. But, for God's sake, keep your head on your shoulders! And the Guises would cut it off as la Bourguignonne cuts off a turnip, for the people who are employing you would throw you over at once.'

'I know that, father,' said Christophe.

'And you are so bold as that! You know it, and you will risk it?'

'Yes, father.'

'Why, the Devil's in it!' cried the old man, hugging his son, 'we may understand each other; you are your

father's son.—My boy, you will be a credit to the family, and your old father may be plain with you, I see.—But do not be more of a Huguenot than the Messieurs de Coligny ; and do not draw your sword. You are to be a man of the pen ; stick to your part as a sucking lawyer.—Well, tell me no more till you have succeeded. If I hear nothing of you for four days after you reach Blois, that silence will tell me that you are in danger. Then the old man will follow to save the young one. I have not sold furs for thirty years without knowing the seamy side of a Court robe. I can find means of opening doors.'

Christophe stared with amazement at hearing his father speak thus ; but he feared some parental snare, and held his tongue.

Then he said—

'Very well, make up the account ; write a letter to the Queen. I must be off this moment, or dreadful things will happen.'

'Be off? But how?'

'I will buy a horse.—Write, for God's sake!'

'Here! Mother! Give your boy some money,' the furrier called out to his wife.

She came in, flew to her chest, and gave a purse to Christophe, who excitedly kissed her.

'The account was ready,' said his father ; 'here it is. I will write the letter.'

Christophe took the bill and put it in his pocket.

'But at any rate you will sup with us,' said the goodman. 'In this extremity you and the Lallier girl must exchange rings.'

'Well, I will go to fetch her,' cried Christophe.

The young man feared some indecision in his father, whose character he did not thoroughly appreciate ; he went up to his room, dressed, took out a small trunk, stole downstairs, and placed it with his cloak and rapier under a counter in the shop.

'What the devil are you about?' asked his father, hearing him there.

'I do not want any one to see my preparations for leaving; I have put everything under the counter,' he whispered in reply.

'And here is the letter,' said his father.

Christophe took the paper, and went out as if to fetch their neighbour.

A few moments after Christophe had gone out, old Lallier and his daughter came in, preceded by a woman-servant carrying three bottles of old wine.

'Well, and where is Christophe?' asked the furrier and his wife.

'Christophe?' said Babette; 'we have not seen him.'

'A pretty rogue is my son!' cried Lecamus. 'He tricks me as if I had no beard. Why, old gossip, what will come to us? We live in times when the children are all too clever for their fathers!'

'But he has long been regarded by all the neighbours as a mad follower of Colas,' said Lallier.

'Defend him stoutly on that score,' said the furrier to the goldsmith. 'Youth is foolish, and runs after anything new; but Babette will keep him quiet, she is even newer than Calvin.'

Babette smiled. She truly loved Christophe, was affronted by everything that was ever said against him. She was a girl of the good old middle-class type, brought up under her mother's eye, for she had never left her; her demeanour was as gentle and precise as her features; she was dressed in stuff of harmonious tones of grey; her ruff, plainly pleated, was a contrast by its whiteness to her sober gown; on her head was a black velvet cap, like a child's hood in shape, but trimmed, on each side of her face, with frills and ends of tan-coloured gauze. Though she was fair-haired, with a white skin, she seemed cunning and crafty, though trying to hide her wiliness under the expression of a simple and honest girl.

As long as the two women remained in the room, coming to and fro to lay the cloth, and place the jugs, the large pewter dishes, and the knives and forks, the goldsmith and his daughter, the furrier and his wife, sat in front of the high chimney-place, hung with red serge and black fringes, talking of nothing. It was in vain that Babette asked where Christophe could be; the young Huguenot's father and mother made ambiguous replies; but as soon as the party had sat down to their meal, and the two maids were in the kitchen, Lecamus said to his future daughter-in-law—

'Christophe is gone to the Court.'

'To Blois! What a journey to take without saying good-bye to me!' said Babette.

'He was in a great hurry,' said his old mother.

'Old friend,' said the furrier to Lallier, taking up the thread of the conversation, 'we are going to see hot work in France; the Reformers are astir.'

'If they win the day, it will only be after long fighting, which will be very bad for trade,' said Lallier, incapable of looking higher than the commercial point of view.

'My father, who had seen the end of the wars between the Bourguignons and the Armagnacs, told me that our family would never have lived through them if one of his grandfathers—his mother's father—had not been one of the Goix, the famous butchers at the Halle, who were attached to the Bourguignons, while the other, a Lecamus, was on the side of the Armagnacs; they pretended to be ready to flay each other before the outer world, but at home they were very good friends. So we will try to save Christophe. Perhaps a time may come when he will save us.'

'You are a cunning dog, neighbour,' said the goldsmith.

'No,' replied Lecamus. 'The citizen class must take care of itself, the populace and the nobility alike owe

it a grudge. Everybody is afraid of the middle class in Paris excepting the King, who knows us to be his friends.'

'You who know so much, and who have seen so much,' said Babette timidly, 'pray tell me what it is that the Reformers want.'

'Ay, tell us that, neighbour!' cried the goldsmith. 'I knew the late King's tailor, and I always took him to be a simple soul, with no great genius; he was much such another as you are, they would have given him the Host without requiring him to confess, and all the time he was up to his eyes in this new religion.—He! a man whose ears were worth many hundred thousand crowns. He must have known some secrets worth hearing for the King and Madame de Valentinois to be present when he was tortured.'

'Ay! and terrible secrets too,' said the furrier. 'The Reformation, my friends,' he went on, in a low voice, 'will give the Church lands back to the citizen class. When ecclesiastical privileges are annulled, the Reformers mean to claim equality of taxation for the nobles and the middle class, and to have only the King above all alike—if indeed they have a king at all.'

'What, do away with the Throne?' cried Lallier.

'Well, neighbour,' said Lecamus, 'in the Low Countries the citizens govern themselves by provosts over them, who elect a temporary chief.'

'God bless me! Neighbour, we might do all these fine things, and still be Catholics,' said the goldsmith.

'We are too old to see the triumph of the middle class in Paris, but it will triumph, neighbour, all in good time, all in good time! Why, the King is bound to rely on us to hold his own, and we have always been well paid for our support. And the last time all the citizens were ennobled, and they had leave to buy manors, and take the names of their estates without any special letters patent from the King. You and I, for instance, grandsons of the Goix in the female line, are we not as good as many a nobleman?'

This speech was so alarming to the goldsmith and the two women, that it was followed by a long silence. The leaven of 1789 was already germinating in the blood of Lecamus, who was not yet so old but that he lived to see the daring of his class under the Ligue.

'Is business pretty firm in spite of all this turmoil?' Lallier asked the furrier's wife.

'It always upsets trade a little,' said she.

'Yes, and so I have a great mind to make a lawyer of my son,' added Lecamus. 'People are always going to law.'

The conversation then dwelt on the commonplace, to the goldsmith's great satisfaction, for he did not like political disturbances or over-boldness of thought.

The banks of the Loire, from Blois as far as Angers, were always greatly favoured by the two last branches of the Royal Family who occupied the throne before the advent of the Bourbons. This beautiful valley so well deserves the preference of kings, that one of our most elegant writers describes it as follows:—'There is a province in France which is never sufficiently admired. As fragrant as Italy, as flowery as the banks of the Guadalquivir, beautiful besides with its own peculiar beauty. Wholly French, it has always been French, unlike our Northern provinces, debased by Teutonic influence, or our Southern provinces, which have been the concubines of the Moors, of the Spaniards, of every nation that has coveted them—this pure, chaste, brave, and loyal tract is Touraine! There is the seat of historic France. Auvergne is Auvergne, Languedoc is Languedoc and nothing more; but Touraine is France, and the truly national river to us is the Loire which waters Touraine. We need not, therefore, be surprised to find such a quantity of monuments in the departments which have taken their names from that of the Loire and its derivations. At every step in that land of

enchantment we come upon a picture of which the foreground is the river, or some calm reach, in whose liquid depths are mirrored a château, with its turrets, its woods, and its dancing springs. It was only natural that large fortunes should centre round spots where Royalty preferred to live, and where it so long held its Court, and that distinguished birth and merit should crowd thither and build palaces on a par with Royalty itself.'

Is it not strange, indeed, that our sovereigns should never have taken the advice indirectly given them by Louis XI., and have made Tours the capital of the kingdom? Without any very great expenditure, the Loire might have been navigable so far for trading vessels and light ships of war. There the seat of Government would have been safe from surprise and high-handed invasion. There the strongholds of the north would not have needed such sums for their fortifications, which alone have cost as much money as all the splendours of Versailles. If Louis XIV. had listened to Vauban's advice, and had his palace built at Mont-Louis, between the Loire and the Cher, perhaps the Revolution of 1789 would never have taken place.

So these fair banks bear, at various spots, clear marks of royal favour. The châteaux of Chambord, Blois, Amboise, Chenonceaux, Chaumont, Plessis-les-Tours, all the residences built by kings' mistresses, by financiers, and noblemen, at Véretz, Azay-le-Rideau, Ussé, Villandri, Valençay, Chanteloup, and Duretal, some of which have disappeared, though most are still standing, are splendid buildings, full of the wonders of the period that has been so little appreciated by the literary sect of Mediævalists.

Of all these châteaux, that of Blois, where the Court was then residing, is the one on which the magnificence of the Houses of Orleans and of Valois has most splendidly set its stamp; and it is the most curious to historians, archæologists, and Catholics. At that time it stood

quite alone. The town, enclosed in strong walls with towers, lay below the stronghold, for at that time the château served both as a citadel and as a country residence. Overlooking the town, of which the houses, then as now, climbed the hill on the right bank of the river, their blue slate roofs in close array, there is a triangular plateau, divided by a stream, now unimportant since it runs underground, but in the fifteenth century, as historians tell us, flowing at the bottom of a rather deep ravine, part of which remains as a deep hollow-way, almost a precipice, between the suburb and the château.

It was on this plateau, with a slope to the north and south, that the Comtes de Blois built themselves a 'castel' in the architecture of the twelfth century, where the notorious Thibault le Tricheur, Thibault le Vieux, and many more held a court that became famous. In those days of pure feudal rule, when the King was no more than *inter pares primus* (the first among equals), as a King of Poland finely expressed it, the Counts of Champagne, of Blois, and of Anjou, the mere Barons of Normandy, and the Dukes of Brittany lived in the style of sovereigns and gave kings to the proudest kingdoms. The Plantagenets of Anjou, the Lusignans of Poitou, the Roberts and Williams of Normandy, by their audacious courage mingled their blood with royal races, and sometimes a simple knight, like du Glaicquin (or du Guesclin), refused royal purple and preferred the Constable's sword.

When the Crown had secured Blois as a royal demesne, Louis XII., who took a fancy to the place, perhaps to get away from Plessis and its sinister associations, built on to the château, at an angle, so as to face east and west, a wing connecting the residence of the Counts of Blois with the older structure, of which nothing now remains but the immense hall where the States-General sat under Henri III. Francis I., before

he fell in love with Chambord, intended to finish the château by building on the other two sides of a square; but he abandoned Blois for Chambord, and erected only one wing, which in his time and in that of his grandsons practically constituted the château.

This third building of Francis I.'s is much more extensive and more highly decorated than the Louvre *de Henri II.*, as it is called. It is one of the most fantastic efforts of the architecture of the Renaissance. Indeed, at a time when a more reserved style of building prevailed, and no one cared for the Middle Ages, a time when literature was not so intimately allied with art as it now is, la Fontaine wrote of the Château of Blois in his characteristically artless language: 'Looking at it from outside, the part done by order of Francis I. pleased me more than all the rest; there are a number of little windows, little balconies, little colonnades, little ornaments, not regularly ordered, which make up something great which I found very pleasing.'

Thus the Château of Blois had the attraction of representing three different kinds of architecture—three periods, three systems, three dynasties. And there is not, perhaps, any other royal residence which in this respect can compare with it. The vast building shows, in one enclosure, in one courtyard, a complete picture of that great product of national life and manners which Architecture always is.

At the time when Christophe was bound for the Court, that portion of the precincts on which a fourth palace now stands—the wing added seventy years later, during his exile, by Gaston, Louis XIII.'s rebellious brother—was laid out in pastures and terraced gardens, picturesquely scattered among the foundation stones and unfinished towers begun by Francis I. These gardens were joined by a bold flying bridge—which some old inhabitants still alive saw destroyed—to a garden on the other side of the château, which by the slope of the

ground lay on the same level. The gentlemen attached to Queen Anne de Bretagne, or those who approached her with petitions from her native province, to discuss, or to inform her of the state of affairs there, were wont to await her pleasure here, her *lever*, or the hour of her walking out. Hence history has handed down to us as the name of this pleasaunce *Le Perchoir aux Bretons* (the Bretons' Perch); it now is an orchard belonging to some private citizen, projecting beyond the Place des Jésuites. That square also was then included in the domain of this noble residence which had its upper and its lower gardens. At some distance from the Place des Jésuites, a summer-house may still be seen built by Catherine dé Medici, as local historians tell us, to accommodate her hot baths. This statement enables us to trace the very irregular arrangement of the gardens which went up and down hill, following the undulations of the soil; the land about the château is indeed very uneven, a fact which added to its strength, and, as we shall see, caused the difficulties of the Duc de Guise.

The gardens were reached by corridors and terraces; the chief corridor was known as the Galerie des Cerfs (or stags), on account of its decorations. This passage led to a magnificent staircase, which undoubtedly suggested the famous double staircase at Chambord, and which led to the apartments on each floor.

Though la Fontaine preferred the château of Francis I. to that of Louis XII., the simplicity of the *Père du Peuple* may perhaps charm the genuine artist, much as he may admire the splendour of the more chivalrous king. The elegance of the two staircases which lie at the two extremities of Louis XII.'s building, the quantity of fine and original carving, of which, though time has damaged them, the remains are still the delight of antiquaries; everything, to the almost cloister-like arrangement of the rooms, points to very simple habits. As yet the Court was evidently non-existent, or had not attained such

development as Francis I. and Catherine de' Medici subsequently gave it, to the great detriment of feudal manners. As we admire the brackets, the capitals of some of the columns, and some little figures of exquisite delicacy, it is impossible not to fancy that Michel Colomb, the great sculptor, the Michael Angelo of Brittany, must have passed that way to do his Queen Anne a pleasure, before immortalising her on her father's tomb—the last Duke of Brittany.

Whatever la Fontaine may say, nothing can be more stately than the residence of Francis, the magnificent King. Thanks to I know not what coarse indifference, perhaps to utter forgetfulness, the rooms occupied by Catherine de' Medici and her son Francis II. still remain almost in their original state. The historian may reanimate them with the tragical scenes of the Reformation, of which the struggle of the Guises and the Bourbons against the House of Valois formed a complicated drama played out on this spot.

The buildings of Francis I. quite crush the simpler residence of Louis XII. by sheer mass. From the side of the lower gardens, that is to say, from the modern Place des Jésuites, the château is twice as lofty as from the side towards the inner court. The ground floor, in which are the famous corridors, is the second floor in the garden front. Thus the first floor, where Queen Catherine resided, is in fact the third, and the royal apartments are on the fourth above the lower garden, which at that time was divided from the foundations by a very deep moat. Thus the château, imposing as it is from the court, seems quite gigantic when seen from the Place as la Fontaine saw it, for he owns that he never had been into the court or the rooms. From the Place des Jésuites every detail looks small. The balconies you can walk along, the colonnades of exquisite workmanship, the sculptured windows—their recesses within, as large as small rooms, and used, in fact, at that time as

boudoirs—have a general effect resembling the painted fancies of operatic scenery when the artist represents a fairy palace. But once inside the court, the infinite delicacy of this architectural ornamentation is displayed, to the joy of the amazed spectator, though the stories above the ground floor are, even there, as high as the Pavillon de l'Horloge at the Tuileries.

This part of the building, where Catherine and Mary Stewart held magnificent court, had in the middle of the façade a hexagonal hollow tower, up which winds a staircase in stone, an arabesque device invented by giants and executed by dwarfs to give this front the effect of a dream. The balustrade of the stairs rises in a spiral of rectangular panels composing the five walls of the tower, and forming at regular intervals a transverse cornice, enriched outside and in with florid carvings in stone. This bewildering creation, full of delicate and ingenious details and marvels of workmanship, by which these stones speak to us, can only be compared to the overcharged and deeply cut ivory carvings that come from China, or are made at Dieppe. In short, the stone is like lace. Flowers and figures of men and animals creep down the ribs, multiply at every step, and crown the vault with a pendant, in which the chisels of sixteenth century sculptors have outdone the artless stone-carvers who, fifty years before, had made the pendants for two staircases in Louis XII.'s building. Though we may be dazzled as we note these varied forms repeated with infinite prolixity, we nevertheless perceive that Francis I. lacked money for Blois, just as Louis XIV. did for Versailles. In more than one instance a graceful head looks out from a block of stone almost in the rough. More than one fanciful boss is but sketched with a few strokes of the chisel, and then abandoned to the damp, which has overgrown it with green mould. On the façade, by the side of one window carved like lace, another shows us the massive frame eaten into

by time, which has carved it after a manner of its own.

The least artistic, the least experienced eye finds here a delightful contrast between this front, rippling with marvels of design, and the inner front of Louis XII.'s château, consisting on the ground floor of arches of the airiest lightness, upheld by slender columns, resting on elegant balustrades, and two stories above with windows wrought with charming severity. Under the arches runs a gallery, of which the walls were painted in fresco; the vaulting too must have been painted, for some traces are still visible of that magnificence, imitated from Italian architecture—a reminiscence of our Kings' journeys thither when the Milanese belonged to them.

Opposite the residence of Francis I. there was at that time the chapel of the Counts of Blois, its façade almost harmonising with the architecture of Louis XII.'s building. No figure of speech can give an adequate idea of the solid dignity of these three masses of building. In spite of the varieties of style, a certain imposing royalty, showing the extent of its fear by the magnitude of its defences, held the three buildings together, different as they were; two of them flanking the immense hall of the States-General, as vast and lofty as a church.

And certainly neither the simplicity nor the solidity of those citizen lives which were described at the beginning of this narrative—lives in which Art was always represented—was lacking to this royal residence. Blois was the fertile and brilliant example which found a living response from citizens and nobles, from money and rank, alike in towns and in the country. You could not have wished that the home of the King who ruled Paris as it was in the sixteenth century should be other than this. The splendid raiment of the upper classes, the luxury of feminine attire, must have seemed singularly suited to the elaborate dress of these curiously wrought stones.

From floor to floor, as he mounted the wonderful

stairs of his castle of Blois, the King of France could see further and further over the beautiful Loire, which brought him news of all his realm, which it parts into two confronted and almost rival halves. If, instead of placing Chambord in a dead and gloomy plain two leagues away, Francis I. had built a Chambord to complete Blois on the site of the gardens, where Gaston subsequently erected his palace, Versailles would never have existed, and Blois would inevitably have become the capital of France.

Four Valois and Catherine de' Medici lavished their wealth on the Château of Blois, but any one can guess how prodigal the sovereigns were, only from seeing the thick dividing wall, the spinal column of the building, with deep alcoves cut into its substance, secret stairs and closets contrived within it, surrounding such vast rooms as the council hall, the guard-room, and the royal apartments, in which a company of infantry now finds ample quarters. Even if the visitor should fail to understand at a first glance that the marvels of the interior are worthy of those of the exterior, the remains of Catherine de' Medici's room—into which Christophe was presently admitted—are sufficient evidence of the elegant art which peopled these rooms with lively fancies, with salamanders sparkling among flowers, with all the most brilliant hues of the palette of the sixteenth century decorating the darkest staircase. In that room the observer may still see the traces of that love of gilding which Catherine had brought from Italy, for the princesses of her country loved (as the author above quoted delightfully expresses it) to overlay the châteaux of France with the gold gained in trade by their ancestors, and to stamp the walls of royal rooms with the sign of their wealth.

The Queen-mother occupied the rooms on the first floor that had formerly been those of Queen Claude de France, Francis I.'s wife; and the delicate sculpture is

still to be seen of double C's, with a device in pure white of swans and lilies, signifying *Candidior candidis*, the whitest of the white, the badge of that Queen whose name, like Catherine's, began with C, and equally appropriate to Louis XII.'s daughter and to the mother of the Valois; for notwithstanding the violence of Calvinist slander, no doubt was ever thrown on Catherine de' Medici's enduring fidelity to Henri II.

The Queen-mother, with two young children still on her hands—a boy, afterwards the Duc d'Alençon, and Marguerite, who became the wife of Henri IV., and whom Charles IX. called Margot—needed the whole of this first floor.

King Francis II. and his Queen Mary Stewart had the royal apartments on the second floor that Francis I. had occupied, and which were also those of Henri III. The royal apartments, and those of the Queen-mother, are divided from end to end of the château into two parts by the famous party wall, four feet thick, which supports the thrust of the immensely thick walls of the rooms. Thus on the lower as well as on the upper floor the rooms are in two distinct suites. That half which, facing to the south, is lighted from the court, held the rooms for state receptions and public business; while, to escape the heat, the private rooms had a north aspect, where there is a splendid frontage with arcades and balconies, and a view over the county of the Vendômois, the *Perchoir aux Bretons*, and the moats of the town—the only town mentioned by the great fable writer, the admirable la Fontaine.

Francis I.'s château at that time ended at an enormous tower, only begun, but intended to mark the vast angle the palace would have formed in turning a flank; Gaston subsequently demolished part of its walls to attach his palace to the tower; but he never finished the work, and the tower remains a ruin. This royal keep was used as a prison, or, according to popular tradition, as *oubliettes*. What poet would not feel deep

regret or weep for France as he wanders now through the hall of this magnificent château, and sees the exquisite arabesques of Catherine de Medici's room, whitewashed and almost smothered by order of the governor of the barracks at the time of the cholera—for this royal residence is now a barrack.

The panelling of Catherine de' Medici's closet, of which more particular mention will presently be made, is the last relic of the rich furnishing collected by five artistic kings.

As we make our way through this labyrinth of rooms, halls, staircases, and turrets, we can say with horrible certainty, 'Here Mary Stewart cajoled her husband in favour of the Guises. There those Guises insulted Catherine. Later, on this very spot, the younger *Balafré* fell under the swords of the avengers of the Crown. A century earlier Louis XII. signalled from that window to invite the advance of his friend the Cardinal d'Amboise. From this balcony, d'Épernon, Ravaillac's accomplice, welcomed Queen Marie de' Medici, who, it is said, knew of the intended regicide and left things to take their course!'

In the chapel where Henry IV. and Marguerite de Valois were betrothed—the last remnant of the old château of the Counts of Blois—the regimental boots are made. This wonderful structure, where so many styles are combined, where such great events have been accomplished, is in a state of ruin which is a disgrace to France. How grievous it is to those who love the memorial buildings of old France, to feel that ere long these eloquent stones will have gone the way of the house at the corner of the Rue de la Vieille-Pelleterie: they will survive, perhaps, only in these pages.

It is necessary to observe that, in order to keep a keener eye on the Court, the Guises, though they had a mansion in the town, which is still to be seen, had obtained permission to reside above the rooms of Louis

XII. in the apartments since used by the Duchesse de Nemours, in the upper story on the second floor.

Francis II. and his young Queen, Mary Stewart, in love like two children of sixteen, as they were, had been suddenly transferred, one cold winter's day, from Saint-Germain, which the Duc de Guise thought too open to surprise, to the stronghold, as it then was, of Blois, isolated on three sides by precipitous slopes, while its gates were strictly guarded. The Guises, the Queen's uncles, had the strongest reasons for not living in Paris, and for detaining the Court in a place which could be easily guarded and defended.

A struggle for the throne was being carried on, which was not ended till twenty-eight years later, in 1588, when, in this same château of Blois, Henri III., bitterly humiliated by the House of Lorraine, under his mother's very eyes, planned the death of the boldest of the Guises, the second Balafré (or scarred), son of the first Balafré, by whom Catherine de' Medici was tricked, imprisoned, spied on, and threatened.

Indeed, the fine Château of Blois was to Catherine the strictest prison. On the death of her husband, who had always kept her in leading-strings, she had hoped to rule; but, on the contrary, she found herself a slave to strangers, whose politeness was infinitely more cruel than the brutality of gaolers. She could do nothing that was not known. Those of her ladies who were attached to her either had lovers devoted to the Guises, or Argus eyes watching over them. Indeed, at that time the conflict of passions had the capricious vagaries which they always derive from the powerful antagonism of two hostile interests in the State. Love-making, which served Catherine well, was also an instrument in the hands of the Guises. Thus the Prince de Condé, the leader of the Reformed party, was attached to the Maréchale de Saint-André, whose husband was the Grand Master's tool. The Cardinal, who had learnt from the

affair of the Vidame de Chartres that Catherine was unconquered rather than unconquerable, was paying court to her. Thus the play of passions brought strange complications into that of politics,making a double game of chess, as it were, in which it was necessary to read both the heart and brain of a man, and to judge, on occasion, whether one would not belie the other.

Though she lived constantly under the eye of the Cardinal de Lorraine or of his brother, the Duc François de Guise, who both distrusted her, Catherine's most immediate and shrewdest enemy was her daughter-in-law, Queen Mary, a little fair girl as mischievous as a waiting-maid, as proud as a Stewart might be who wore three crowns, as learned as an ancient scholar, as tricky as a school-girl, as much in love with her husband as a courtesan of her lover, devoted to her uncles, whom she admired, and delighted to find that King Francis, by her persuasion, shared her high opinion of them. A mother-in-law is always a person disliked by her daughter-in-law, especially when she has won the crown and would like to keep it—as Catherine had imprudently too plainly shown. Her former position, when Diane de Poitiers ruled King Henri II., had been more endurable; at least she had enjoyed the homage due to a Queen, and the respect of the Court; whereas, now, the Duke and the Cardinal, having none about them but their own creatures, seemed to take pleasure in humiliating her. Catherine, a prisoner among courtiers, was the object, not every day, but every hour, of blows offensive to her dignity; for the Guises persisted in carrying on the same system as the late King had employed to thwart her.

The six-and-thirty years of disaster which devastated France may be said to have begun with the scene in which the most perilous part had been allotted to the son of the Queen's furrier—a part which makes him the leading figure in this narrative. The danger into which this zealous reformer was falling became evident in the

course of the morning when he set out from the river-port of Beaugency, carrying precious documents which compromised the loftiest heads of the nobility, and embarked for Blois in company with a crafty partisan, the indefatigable la Renaudie, who had arrived on the quay before him.

While the barque conveying Christophe was being wafted down the Loire before a light easterly breeze, the famous Cardinal de Lorraine, and the second Duc de Guise, one of the greatest war captains of the time, were considering their position, like two eagles on a rocky peak, and looking cautiously round before striking the first great blow by which they tried to kill the Reformation in France. This was to be struck at Amboise, and it was repeated in Paris twelve years later, on the 24th August 1572.

In the course of the previous night, three gentlemen, who played an important part in the twelve years' drama that arose from this double plot laid by the Guises on one hand and the Reformers on the other, had arrived at the château at a furious gallop, leaving their horses half dead at the postern gate, held by captains and men who were wholly devoted to the Duc de Guise, the idol of the soldiery.

A word must be said as to this great man, and first of all a word to explain his present position.

His mother was Antoinette de Bourbon, great-aunt of Henri IV. But of what account are alliances! At this moment he aimed at nothing less than his cousin de Condé's head. Mary Stewart was his niece. His wife was Anne, daughter of the Duke of Ferrara. The Grand Connétable Anne de Montmorency addressed the Duc de Guise as 'Monseigneur,' as he wrote to the King, and signed himself 'Your very humble servant.' Guise, the Grand Master of the King's household, wrote in reply, 'Monsieur le Connétable,' and signed, as in writing to the Parlement, 'Your faithful friend.'

As for the Cardinal, nicknamed the Transalpine Pope, and spoken of by Estienne as 'His Holiness,' the whole Monastic Church of France was on his side, and he treated with the Pope as his equal. He was vain of his eloquence, and one of the ablest theologians of his time, while he kept watch over France and Italy by the instrumentality of three religious Orders entirely devoted to him, who were on foot for him day and night, serving him as spies and reporters.

These few words are enough to show to what a height of power the Cardinal and the Duke had risen. In spite of their wealth and the revenues of their officers, they were so entirely disinterested, or so much carried away by the tide of politics, and so generous too, that both were in debt — no doubt after the manner of Cæsar. Hence, when Henri III. had seen his threatening foe murdered, the second Balafré, the House of Guise was inevitably ruined. Their vast outlay for above a century, in hope of seizing the Crown, accounts for the decay of this great House under Louis XIII. and Louis XIV., when the sudden end of MADAME revealed to all Europe how low a Chevalier de Lorraine had fallen.

So the Cardinal and the Duke, proclaiming themselves the heirs of the deposed Carlovingian kings, behaved very insolently to Catherine de' Medici, their niece's mother-in-law. The Duchesse de Guise spared Catherine no mortification; she was an Este, and Catherine de' Medici was the daughter of self-made Florentine merchants, whom the sovereigns of Europe had not yet admitted to their royal fraternity. Francis I. had regarded his son's marriage with a Medici as a mésalliance, and had only allowed it in the belief that this son would never be the Dauphin. Hence his fury when the Dauphin died, poisoned by the Florentine Montecuculi.

The Estes refused to recognise the Medici as Italian princes. These time-honoured merchants were, in fact, struggling with the impossible problem of maintaining a

throne in the midst of republican institutions. The title of Grand Duke was not bestowed on the Medici till much later by Philip II., King of Spain; and they earned it by treason to France, their benefactress, and by a servile attachment to the Court of Spain, which was covertly thwarting them in Italy.

'Flatter none but your enemies!' This great axiom, uttered by Catherine, would seem to have ruled all the policy of this merchant race, which never lacked great men till its destinies had grown great, and which broke down a little too soon under the degeneracy which is always the end of royal dynasties and great families.

For three generations there was a prelate and a warrior of the House of Lorraine; but, which is perhaps not less remarkable, the Churchman had always shown—as did the present Cardinal—a singular likeness to Cardinal Ximenes, whom the Cardinal de Richelieu also resembled. These five prelates all had faces that were at once mean and terrifying; while the warrior's face was of that Basque and mountain type which reappears in the features of Henri IV. In both the father and the son it was seamed by a scar, which did not destroy the grace and affability that bewitched their soldiers as much as their bravery.

The way and the occasion of the Grand Master's being wounded is not without interest here, for it was healed by the daring of one of the personages of this drama, Ambroise Paré, who was under obligation to the Syndic of the furriers. At the siege of Calais the Duke's head was pierced by a lance which, entering below the right eye, went through to the neck below the left ear, the end broke off and remained in the wound. The Duke was lying in his tent in the midst of the general woe, and would have died but for the bold promptitude and devotion of Ambroise Paré.

'The Duke is not dead, gentlemen,' said Paré, turning to the bystanders, who were dissolved in tears. 'But he

soon will be,' he added, 'unless I treat him as if he were, and I will try it at the risk of the worst that can befall me. . . . You see!'

He set his left foot on the Duke's breast, took the stump of the lance with his nails, loosened it by degrees, and at last drew the spear-head out of the wound, as if it had been from some senseless object instead of a man's head. Though he cured the Prince he had handled so boldly, he could not hinder him from bearing to his grave the terrible scar from which he had his name. His son also had the same nickname for a similar reason.

Having gained entire mastery over the King, who was ruled by his wife, as a result of the passionate and mutual affection which the Guises knew how to turn to account, the two great Princes of Lorraine reigned over France, and had not an enemy at Court but Catherine de' Medici. And no great politician ever played a closer game. The respective attitudes of Henri II.'s ambitious widow, and of the no less ambitious House of Lorraine, was symbolised, as it were, by the positions they held on the terrace of the château on the very morning when Christophe was about to arrive there. The Queen-mother, feigning extreme affection for the Guises, had asked to be informed as to the news brought by the three gentlemen who had arrived from different parts of the kingdom; but she had been mortified by a polite dismissal from the Cardinal. She was walking at the further end of the pleasaunce above the Loire, where she was having an observatory erected for her astrologer, Ruggieri; the building may still be seen, and from it a wide view is to be had over the beautiful valley. The two Guises were on the opposite side overlooking the Vendômois, the upper part of the town, the Perchoir aux Bretons, and the postern gate of the château.

Catherine had deceived the brothers, tricking them by an assumption of dissatisfaction; for she was really very glad to be able to speak with one of the gentlemen who

had come in hot haste, and who was in her secret confidence; who boldly played a double game, but who was, to be sure, well paid for it. This gentleman was Chiverni, who affected to be the mere tool of the Cardinal de Lorraine, but who was in reality in Catherine's service. Catherine had two other devoted allies in the two Gondis, creatures of her own; but they, as Florentines, were too open to the suspicions of the Guises to be sent into the country; she kept them at the Court, where their every word and action was closely watched, but where they, on their side, watched the Guises and reported to Catherine. These two Italians kept a third adherent to the Queen-mother's faction, Birague, a clever Piedmontese who, like Chiverni, pretended to have abandoned Catherine to attach himself to the Guises, and who encouraged them in their undertakings while spying for Catherine.

Chiverni had arrived from Écouen and Paris. The last to ride in was Saint-André, Marshal of France, who rose to be such an important personage that the Guises adopted him as the third of the triumvirate they formed against Catherine in the following year. But earlier than either of these, Vieilleville, the builder of the Château of Duretal, who had also by his devotion to the Guises earned the rank of Marshal, had secretly come and more secretly gone, without any one knowing what the mission might be that the Grand Master had given him. Saint-André, it was known, had been instructed to take military measures to entice all the reformers who were under arms to Amboise, as the result of a Council held by the Cardinal de Lorraine, the Duc de Guise, Birague, Chiverni, Vieilleville, and Saint-André. As the heads of the House of Lorraine thus employed Birague, it is to be supposed that they trusted to their strength, for they knew that he was attached to the Queen-mother; but it is possible that they kept him about them with a view to discovering their rival's secret designs, as she allowed

him to attend them. In those strange times the double part played by some political intriguers was known to both the parties who employed them; they were like cards in the hands of players, and the craftiest won the game.

All through this sitting the brothers had been impenetrably guarded. Catherine's conversation with her friends will, however, fully explain the purpose of this meeting, convened by the Guises in the open air, at break of day, in the terraced garden, as though every one feared to speak within the walls full of ears of the Château of Blois.

The Queen-mother, who had been walking about all the morning with the two Gondi, under pretence of examining the observatory that was being built, but, in fact, anxiously watching the hostile party, was presently joined by Chiverni. She was standing at the angle of the terrace opposite the Church of Saint-Nicholas, and there feared no listeners. The wall is as high as the church-towers, and the Guises always held council at the other corner of the terrace, below the dungeon then begun, walking to and from the Perchoir des Bretons and the arcade by the bridge which joined the gardens to the Perchoir. There was nobody at the bottom of the ravine.

Chiverni took the Queen's hand to kiss it, and slipped into her fingers a tiny letter without being seen by the Italians. Catherine quickly turned away, walked to the corner of the parapet, and read as follows:—

'You are powerful enough to keep the balance true between the great ones, and to make them contend as to which shall serve you best; you have your house full of kings, and need not fear either Lorrains or Bourbons so long as you set them against each other; for both sides aim at snatching the crown from your children. Be your advisers' mistress, and not their slave; keep up each side by the other; otherwise the kingdom will go from bad to worse, and great wars may ensue. L'Hôpital.'

The Queen placed this letter in the bosom of her stomacher, reminding herself to burn it as soon as she should be alone.

'When did you see him?' she asked Chiverni.

'On returning from seeing the Connétable at Melun; he was going through with the Duchesse de Berri, whom he was most anxious to convey in safety to Savoy, so as to return here and enlighten the Chancellor Olivier, who is, in fact, the dupe of the Lorrains. Monsieur de l'Hôpital is resolved to adhere to your cause, seeing the aims that Messieurs de Guise have in view. And he will hasten back as fast as possible to give you his vote in the Council.'

'Is he sincere?' said Catherine. 'For you know that when the Lorrains admitted him to the Council, it was to enable them to rule.'

'L'Hôpital is a Frenchman of too good a stock not to be honest,' said Chiverni; 'besides, that letter is a sufficient pledge.'

'And what answer does the Connétable send to these gentlemen?'

'He says the King is his master, and he awaits his orders. On this reply, the Cardinal, to prevent any resistance, will propose to appoint his brother Lieutenant-General of the realm.'

'So soon!' cried Catherine in dismay. 'Well, and did Monsieur de l'Hôpital give you any further message for me?'

'He told me, Madame, that you alone can stand between the throne and Messieurs de Guise.'

'But does he suppose that I will use the Huguenots as a means of defence?'

'Oh, Madam,' cried Chiverni, surprised by her perspicacity, 'we never thought of placing you in such a difficult position.'

'Did he know what a position I am in?' asked the Queen calmly.

'Pretty nearly. He thinks you made a dupe's bargain when, on the death of the late King, you accepted for your share the fragments saved from the ruin of Madame Diane. Messieurs de Guise thought they had paid their debt to the Queen by gratifying the woman.'

'Yes,' said Catherine, looking at the two Gondis, 'I made a great mistake there.'

'A mistake the gods might make!' replied Charles de Gondi.

'Gentlemen,' said the Queen, 'if I openly take up the cause of the Reformers, I shall be the slave of a party.'

'Madam,' said Chiverni eagerly, 'I entirely agree with you. You must make use of them, but not let them make use of you.'

'Although, for the moment, your strength lies there,' said Charles de Gondi, 'we must not deceive ourselves; success and failure are equally dangerous!'

'I know it,' said the Queen. 'One false move will be a pretext eagerly seized by the Guises to sweep me off the board!'

'A Pope's niece, the mother of four Valois, the Queen of France, the widow of the most ardent persecutor of the Huguenots, an Italian and a Catholic, the aunt of Leo x.,—can you form an alliance with the Reformation?' asked Charles de Gondi.

'On the other hand,' Albert replied, 'is not seconding the Guises consenting to usurpation? You have to deal with a race that looks to the struggle between the Church and the Reformation to give them a crown for the taking. You may avail yourself of Huguenot help without abjuring the Faith.'

'Remember, Madam, that your family, which ought to be wholly devoted to the King of France, is at this moment in the service of the King of Spain,' said Chiverni. 'And it would go over to the Reformation

to-morrow if the Reformation could make the Duke of Florence King!'

'I am very well inclined to give the Huguenots a helping hand for a time,' said Catherine, 'were it only to be revenged on that soldier, that priest, and that woman!'

And with an Italian glance, her eye turned on the Duke and the Cardinal, and then to the upper rooms of the château where her son lived and Mary Stewart. 'Those three snatched the reins of government from my hands,' she went on, 'when I had waited for them long enough while that old woman held them in my place.'

She jerked her head in the direction of Chenonceaux, the château she had just exchanged for Chaumont with Diane de Poitiers. '*Ma*,' she said in Italian, 'it would seem that these gentry of the Geneva bands have not wit enough to apply to me!—On my honour, I cannot go to meet them! And not one of you would dare to carry them a message.' She stamped her foot. 'I hoped you might have met the hunchback at Écouen,' she said to Chiverni. 'He has brains.'

'He was there, Madame,' replied Chiverni, 'but he could not induce the Connétable to join him. Monsieur de Montmorency would be glad enough to overthrow the Guises, who obtained his dismissal; but he will have nothing to do with heresy.'

'And who, gentlemen, is to crush these private whims that are an offence to Royalty? By Heaven! these nobles must be made to destroy each other—as Louis XI. made them, the greatest of your kings. In this kingdom there are four or five parties, and my son's is the weakest of them all.'

'The Reformation is an idea,' remarked Charles de Gondi, 'and the parties crushed by Louis the Eleventh were based only on interest.'

'There is always an idea to back up interest,' replied

Chiverni. 'In Louis XI.'s time the idea was called the Great Fief!'

'Use heresy as an axe,' said Albert de Gondi. 'You will not incur the odium of executions.'

'Ha!' said the Queen, 'but I know nothing of the strength or the schemes of these folks, and I cannot communicate with them through any safe channel. If I were found out in any such conspiracy, either by the Queen, who watches me as if I were an infant in arms, or by my two gaolers, who let no one come in to the château, I should be banished from the country, and taken back to Florence under a formidable escort captained by some ruffianly Guisard! Thank you, friends!—Oh, daughter-in-law! I hope you may some day be a prisoner in your own house; then you will know what you have inflicted on me!'

'Their schemes!' exclaimed Chiverni. 'The Grand Master and the Cardinal know them; but those two foxes will not tell. If you, Madam, can make them tell, I will devote myself to you, and come to an understanding with the Prince de Condé.'

'Which of their plans have they failed to conceal from you?' asked the Queen, glancing towards the brothers de Guise.

'Monsieur de Vieilleville and Monsieur de Saint-André have just had their orders, of which we know nothing; but the Grand Master is concentrating his best troops on the left bank, it would seem. Within a few days you will find yourself at Amboise. The Grand Master came to this terrace to study the position, and he does not think Blois favourable to his private schemes. Well, then, what does he want?' said Chiverni, indicating the steep cliffs that surround the château. 'The Court could nowhere be safer from sudden attack than it is here.'

'Abdicate or govern,' said Albert de Gondi in the Queen's ear as she stood thinking.

A fearful expression of suppressed rage flashed across the Queen's handsome ivory-pale face.—She was not yet forty, and she had lived for twenty-six years in the French Court, absolutely powerless, she, who ever since she had come there had longed to play the leading part.

'Never so long as this son lives! His wife has bewitched him!'

After a short pause these terrible words broke from her in the language of Dante.

Catherine's exclamation had its inspiration in a strange prediction, spoken a few days before at the Château of Chaumont, on the opposite bank of the Loire, whither she had gone with her astrologer Ruggieri to consult a famous soothsayer. This woman was brought to meet her by Nostradamus, the chief of those physicians who in that great sixteenth century believed in the occult sciences, with Ruggieri, Cardan, Paracelsus, and many more. This fortune-teller, of whose life history has no record, had fixed the reign of Francis II. at one year's duration.

'And what is your opinion of all this?' Catherine asked Chiverni.

'There will be fighting,' said the cautious gentleman. 'The King of Navarre——'

'Oh! say the Queen!' Catherine put in.

'Very true, the Queen,' said Chiverni, smiling, 'has made the Prince de Condé the chief of the reformed party; he, as a younger son, may dare much; and Monsieur le Cardinal talks of sending for him to come here.'

'If only he comes!' cried the Queen, 'I am saved!'

So it will be seen that the leaders of the great Reforming movement had been right in thinking of Catherine as an ally.

'This is the jest of it,' said the Queen; 'the Bourbons are tricking the Huguenots, and Master Calvin, de Bèze,

and the rest are cheating the Bourbons; but shall we be strong enough to take in the Huguenots, the Bourbons, and the Guises? In front of three such foes we are justified in feeling our pulse,' said she.

'They have not the King,' replied Albert. 'You must always win, having the King on your side.'

'*Maladetta Maria!*' said Catherine, between her teeth.

'The Guises are already thinking of diverting the affections of the middle class,' said Birague.

The hope of snatching the Crown had not been premeditated by the two heads of the refractory House of Guise; there was nothing to justify the project or the hope; circumstances suggested such audacity. The two Cardinals and the two *Balafrés* were, as it happened, four ambitious men, superior in political gifts to any of the men about them. Indeed, the family was only subdued at last by Henri IV., himself a leader of faction, brought up in the great school of which Catherine and the Guises were the teachers—and he had profited by their lessons.

At this time these two brothers were the arbiters of the greatest revolution attempted in Europe since that carried through in England under Henry VIII., which had resulted from the invention of printing. They were the enemies of the Reformation, the power was in their hands, and they meant to stamp out heresy; but Calvin, their opponent, though less famous than Luther, was a stronger man. Calvin saw Government where Luther had only seen Dogma. Where the burly, beer-drinking, uxorious German fought with the Devil, flinging his inkstand at the fiend, the man of Picardy, frail and unmarried, dreamed of plans of campaign, of directing battles, of arming princes, and of raising whole nations by disseminating republican doctrines in the hearts of the middle classes, so as to make up, by increased

progress in the Spirit of Nations, for his constant defeats on the battlefield.

The Cardinal de Lorraine and the Duc de Guise knew quite as well as Philip II. and the Duke of Alva where the Monarchy was aimed at, and how close the connection was between Catholicism and sovereignty. Charles V., intoxicated with having drunk too deeply of Charlemagne's cup, and trusting too much in the strength of his rule, for he believed that he and Soliman might divide the world between them, was not at first conscious that his front was attacked; as soon as Cardinal Granvelle showed him the extent of the festering sore, he abdicated.

The Guises had a startling conception: they would extinguish heresy with a single blow. They tried to strike that blow for the first time at Amboise, and they made a second attempt on Saint-Bartholomew's Day; this time they were in accord with Catherine de' Medici, enlightened as she was by the flames of twelve years' wars, and yet more by the ominous word 'Republic' spoken and even published at a later date by the writers of the Reformation, whose ideas Lecamus, the typical citizen of Paris, had already understood. The two Princes, on the eve of striking a fatal blow to the heart of the nobility, in order to cut it off from the first from a religious party whose triumph would be its ruin, were now discussing the means of announcing their *Coup d'État* to the King, while Catherine was conversing with her four counsellors.

'Jeanne d'Albret knew what she was doing when she proclaimed herself the protectress of the Huguenots! She has in the Reformation a battering-ram which she makes good play with!' said the Grand Master, who had measured the depth of the Queen of Navarre's scheming.

Jeanne d'Albret was, in point of fact, one of the cleverest personages of her time.

'Théodore de Bèze is at Nérac, having taken Calvin's orders.'

'What men those common folk can lay their hands on!' cried the Duke.

'Ay, we have not a man on our side to match that fellow la Renaudie,' said the Cardinal. 'He is a perfect Catiline.'

'Men like him always act on their own account,' replied the Duke. 'Did not I see la Renaudie's value? I loaded him with favours, I helped him to get away when he was condemned by the Bourgogne Parlement, I got him back into France by obtaining a revision of his trial, and I intended to do all I could for him, while he was plotting a diabolical conspiracy against us. The rascal has effected an alliance between the German Protestants and the heretics in France by smoothing over the discrepancies of dogma between Luther and Calvin. He has won over the disaffected nobles to the cause of the Reformation without asking them to abjure Catholicism. So long ago as last year he had thirty commanders on his side! He was everywhere at once: at Lyons, in Languedoc, at Nantes. Finally, he drew up the Articles settled in Council and distributed throughout Germany, in which theologians declare that it is justifiable to use force to get the King out of our hands, and this is being disseminated in every town. Look for him where you will, you will nowhere find him!

'Hitherto I have shown him nothing but kindness! We shall have to kill him like a dog, or to make a bridge of gold for him to cross and come into our house.'

'Brittany and Languedoc, the whole kingdom indeed, is being worked upon to give us a deadly shock,' said the Cardinal. 'After yesterday's festival, I spent the rest of the night in reading all the information sent me by my priesthood; but no one is involved but some impoverished gentlemen and artisans, people who may be either hanged or left alive, it matters not which. The Colignys and the

Condés are not yet visible, though they hold the threads of the conspiracy.'

'Ay,' said the Duke; 'and as soon as that lawyer Avenelles had let the cat out of the bag, I told Braguelonne to give the conspirators their head: they have no suspicions, they think they can surprise us, and then perhaps the leaders will show themselves. My advice would be that we should allow ourselves to be beaten for forty-eight hours——'

'That would be half-an-hour too long,' said the Cardinal in alarm.

'How brave you are!' retorted le Balafré.

The Cardinal went on with calm indifference—

'Whether the Prince de Condé be implicated or no, if we are assured that he is the leader, cut off his head. What we want for that business is judges rather than soldiers, and there will never be any lack of judges! Victory in the Supreme Court is always more certain than on the field of battle, and costs less.'

'I am quite willing,' replied the Duke. 'But do you believe that the Prince de Condé is powerful enough to inspire such audacity in those who are sent on first to attack us? Is there not——?'

'The King of Navarre,' said the Cardinal.

'A gaby who bows low in my presence,' replied the Duke. 'That Florentine woman's graces have blinded you, I think——'

'Oh, I have thought of that already,' said the prelate. 'If I aim at a gallant intimacy with her, is it not that I may read to the bottom of her heart?'

'She has no heart,' said his brother sharply. 'She is even more ambitious than we are.'

'You are a brave commander,' said the Cardinal; 'but take my word for it, our skirts are very near touching, and I made Mary Stewart watch her narrowly before you ever suspected her. Catherine has no more religion in her than my shoe. If she is not the soul of the con-

spiracy, it is not for lack of goodwill; but we will draw her out and see how far she will support us. Till now I know for certain that she has not held any communication with the heretics.'

'It is time that we should lay everything before the King, and the Queen-mother, who knows nothing,' said the Duke, 'and that is the only proof of her innocence. La Renaudie will understand from my arrangements that we are warned. Last night Nemours must have been following up the detachments of the Reformed party, who were coming in by the cross-roads, and the conspirators will be compelled to attack us at Amboise; I will let them all in.—Here,' and he pointed to the three steep slopes of rock on which the Château de Blois is built, just as Chiverni had done a moment since, 'we should have a fight with no result; the Huguenots could come and go at will. Blois is a hall with four doors, while Amboise is a sack.'

'I will not leave the Florentine Queen,' said the Cardinal.

'We have made one mistake,' remarked the Duke, playing with his dagger, tossing it in the air, and catching it again by the handle; 'we ought to have behaved to her as to the Reformers, giving her liberty to move, so as to take her in the act.'

The Cardinal looked at his brother for a minute, shaking his head.

'What does Pardaillan want?' the Duke exclaimed, seeing this young gentleman coming along the terrace. Pardaillan was to become famous for his fight with la Renaudie, in which both were killed.

'Monseigneur, a youth sent here by the Queen's furrier is at the gate, and says that he has a set of ermine to deliver to Her Majesty. Is he to be admitted?'

'To be sure; an ermine surcoat she spoke of but yesterday,' said the Cardinal. 'Let the shop-clerk in. She will need the mantle for her journey by the Loire.'

'Which way did he come, that he was not stopped before reaching the gate?' asked the Grand Master.

'I do not know,' said Pardaillan.

'I will go to see him in the Queen's rooms,' said le Balafré. 'Tell him to await her *lever* in the guard-room. But, Pardaillan, is he young?'

'Yes, Monseigneur; he says he is Lecamus' son.'

'Lecamus is a good Catholic,' said the Cardinal, who, like the Duke, was gifted with a memory like Cæsar's. 'The priest of Saint-Pierre aux Bœufs trusts him, for he is officer of the peace for the Palace.'

'Make this youth chat with the Captain of the Scotch Guard, all the same,' said the Grand Master, with an emphasis which gave the words a very pointed meaning. 'But Ambroise is at the château; through him we shall know at once if he really is the son of Lecamus, who was formerly his very good friend. Ask for Ambroise Paré.'

At this moment the Queen came towards the brothers, who hurried to meet her with marks of respect, in which Catherine never failed to discern deep irony.

'Gentlemen,' said she, 'will you condescend to inform me of what is going on? Is the widow of your late sovereign of less account in your esteem than Messieurs de Vieilleville, Birague, and Chiverni?'

'Madam,' said the Cardinal, with an air of gallantry, 'our first duty as men, before all matters of politics, is not to alarm ladies by false rumours. This morning, indeed, we have had occasion to confer on State affairs. You will pardon my brother for having in the first instance given orders on purely military matters which must be indifferent to you—the really important points remain to be discussed. If you approve, we will all attend the *lever* of the King and Queen; it is close on the hour.'

'Why, what is happening, Monsieur le Grand Maître?' asked Catherine, affecting terror.

'The Reformation, Madam, is no longer a mere

heresy; it is a party which is about to take up arms and seize the King.'

Catherine, with the Cardinal, the Duke, and the gentlemen, made their way towards the staircase by the corridor, which was crowded with courtiers who had not the right of *entrée*, and who ranged themselves against the wall.

Gondi, who had been studying the Princes of Lorraine while Catherine was conversing with them, said in good Tuscan and in Catherine's ear these two words, which became bywords, and which express one aspect of that royally powerful nature—

'*Odiate e aspettate!*' Hate and wait.

Pardaillan, who had delivered to the officer on guard at the gatehouse the order to admit the messenger from the Queen's furrier, found Christophe standing outside the portico and staring at the façade built by good King Louis XII., whereon there was at that time an even more numerous array of sculptured figures of the coarsest buffoonery—if we may judge by what has survived. The curious will detect, for instance, a figure of a woman carved on the capital of one of the columns of the gateway holding up her skirts, and saucily exhibiting 'what Brunel displayed to Marphise' to a burly monk crouching in the capital of the corresponding column at the other jamb of this gate, above which once stood a statue of Louis XII. Several of the windows of this front, ornamented in this grotesque taste, and now unfortunately destroyed, amused, or seemed to amuse, Christophe, whom the gunners of the Guard were already pelting with their pleasantries.

'He would like to be lodged there, he would,' said the sergeant-at-arms, patting his store of charges for his musket, which hung from his belt in the sugar-loaf-shaped cartridges.

'Hallo, you from Paris, you never saw so much before!' said a soldier.

'He recognises good King Louis!' said another.

Christophe affected not to hear them, and tried to look even more helplessly amazed, so that his look of blank stupidity was an excellent recommendation to Pardaillan.

'The Queen is not yet risen,' said the young officer. 'Come and wait in the guardroom.'

Christophe slowly followed Pardaillan. He purposely lingered to admire the pretty covered balcony with an arched front, where, in the reign of Louis XII., the courtiers could wait under cover till the hour of reception if the weather was bad, and where at this moment some of the gentlemen attached to the Guises were grouped; for the staircase, still so well preserved, which led to their apartments is at the end of that gallery, in a tower of which the architecture is greatly admired by the curious.

'Now, then! have you come here to study graven images?' cried Pardaillan, seeing Lecamus riveted in front of the elegant stonework of the outer parapet which unites—or, if you will, separates—the columns of each archway.

Christophe followed the young captain to the grand staircase, not without glancing at this almost Moorish-looking structure from top to bottom with an expression of ecstasy. On this fine morning the court was full of captains-at-arms and of courtiers chatting in groups; and their brilliant costumes gave life to the scene, in itself so bright, for the marvels of architecture that decorated the façade were still quite new.

'Come in here,' said Pardaillan to Lecamus, signing to him to follow him through the carved door on the second floor, which was thrown open by a sentry on his recognising Pardaillan.

Christophe's amazement may easily be imagined on entering this guardroom, so vast, that the military genius of our day has cut it across by a partition to

form two rooms. It extends, in fact, both on the second floor, where the King lived, and on the first, occupied by the Queen-mother, for a third of the length of the front towards the court, and is lighted by two windows to the left and two to the right of the famous staircase. The young captain made his way toward the door leading to the King's room, which opened out of this hall, and desired one of the pages-in-waiting to tell Madame Dayelle, one of the Queen's ladies, that the furrier was in the guardroom with her surcoats.

At a sign from Pardaillan, Christophe went to stand by the side of an officer seated on a low stool in the corner of a chimney-place as large as his father's shop, at one end of this vast hall opposite another exactly like it at the other end. In talking with this gentleman, Christophe succeeded in interesting him by telling him the trivial details of his trade ; and he seemed so completely the craftsman, that the officer volunteered this opinion to the captain of the Scotch Guard, who came in to cross-question the lad while scrutinising him closely out of the corner of his eye.

Though Christophe Lecamus had had ample warning, he still did not understand the cold ferocity of the interested parties between whom Chaudieu had bid him stand. To an observer who should have mastered the secrets of the drama, as the historian knows them now, it would have seemed terrible to see this young fellow, the hope of two families, risking his life between two such powerful and pitiless machines as Catherine and the Guises. But how few brave hearts ever know the extent of their danger! From the way in which the quays of the city and the château were guarded, Christophe had expected to find snares and spies at every step, so he determined to conceal the importance of his errand and the agitation of his mind under the stupid tradesman's stare, which he had put on before Pardaillan, the officer of the Guard, and the captain.

The stir which in a royal residence attends the rising of the King began to be perceptible. The nobles, leaving their horses with their pages or grooms in the outer court, for no one but the King and Queen was allowed to enter the inner court on horseback, were mounting the splendid stairs in twos and threes and filling the guardroom, a large room with two fireplaces—where the huge mantels are now bereft of adornment, where squalid red tiles have taken the place of the fine mosaic flooring, where royal hangings covered the rough walls now daubed with whitewash, and where every art of an age unique in its splendour was displayed at its best.

Catholics and Protestants poured in as much to hear the news and study each other's faces as to pay their court to the King. His passionate affection for Mary Stewart, which neither the Queen-mother nor the Guises attempted to check, and Mary's politic submissiveness in yielding to it, deprived the King of all power; indeed, though he was now seventeen, he knew nothing of Royalty but its indulgences, and of marriage nothing but the raptures of first love. In point of fact, everybody tried to ingratiate himself with Queen Mary and her uncles, the Cardinal de Lorraine and the Grand Master of the Household.

All this bustle went on under the eyes of Christophe, who watched each fresh arrival with very natural excitement. A magnificent curtain, on each side of it a page and a yeoman of the Scotch Guard then on duty, showed him the entrance to that royal chamber, destined to be fatal to the son of the Grand Master, for the younger Balafré fell dead at the foot of the bed now occupied by Mary Stewart and Francis II. The Queen's ladies occupied the chimney-place opposite to that where Christophe was still chatting with the captain of the Guard. This fireplace, by its position, was the seat of honour, for it is built into the thick wall of the council-room, between the door into the royal chamber

and that into the council-room, so that the ladies and gentlemen who had a right to sit there were close to where the King and the Queens must pass. The courtiers were certain to see Catherine; for her maids of honour, in mourning, like the rest of the Court, came up from her rooms conducted by the Countess Fieschi, and took their place on the side next the council-room, facing those of the young Queen, who, led by the Duchesse de Guise, took the opposite angle next the royal bedchamber.

Between the courtiers and these young ladies, all belonging to the first families in the kingdom, a space was kept of some few paces, which none but the greatest nobles were permitted to cross. The Countess Fieschi and the Duchesse de Guise were allowed by right of office to be seated in the midst of their noble charges, who all remained standing.

One of the first to mingle with these dangerous bevies was the Duc d'Orléans, the King's brother, who came down from his rooms above, attended by his tutor, Monsieur de Cypierre. This young Prince, who was destined to reign before the end of the year, under the name of Charles IX., at the age of ten was excessively shy. The Duc d'Anjou and the Duc d'Alençon, his two brothers, and the infant Princess Marguerite, who became the wife of Henri IV., were still too young to appear at Court, and remained in their mother's apartments. The Duc d'Orléans, richly dressed in the fashion of the time, in silk trunk hose, a doublet of cloth of gold, brocaded with flowers in black, and a short cloak of embroidered velvet, all black, for he was still in mourning for the late King his father, bowed to the two elder ladies, and joined the group of his mother's maids of honour. Strongly disliking the Guisards (the adherents of the Guises), he replied coldly to the Duchess's greeting, and went to lean his elbow on the back of the Countess Fieschi's tall chair.

His tutor, Monsieur de Cypierre, one of the finest

characters of that age, stood behind him as a shield. Amyot, in a simple abbé's gown, also attended the Prince; he was his instructor as well as being the teacher of the three other royal children, whose favour was afterwards so advantageous to him.

Between this chimney-place 'of honour' and that at the further end of the hall—where the Guards stood in groups with their captain, a few courtiers, and Christophe carrying his box—the Chancellor Olivier, l'Hôpital's patron and predecessor, in the costume worn ever since by the Chancellors of France, was walking to and fro with Cardinal de Tournon, who had just arrived from Rome, and with whom he exchanged a few phrases in murmurs. On them was centred the general attention of the gentlemen packed against the wall dividing the hall from the King's bedroom, standing like a living tapestry against the rich figured hangings. In spite of the serious state of affairs, the Court presented the same appearance as every Court must, in every country, at every time, and in the midst of the greatest perils. Courtiers always talk of the most trivial subjects while thinking of the gravest, jesting while watching every physiognomy, and considering questions of love and marriage with heiresses in the midst of the most sanguinary catastrophes.

'What did you think of yesterday's fête?' asked Bourdeilles, the Lord of Brantôme, going up to Mademoiselle de Piennes, one of the elder Queen's maids of honour.

'Monsieur du Baïf and Monsieur du Bellay had had the most charming ideas,' said she, pointing to the two gentlemen who had arranged everything, and who were standing close at hand. 'I thought it in atrocious taste,' she added in a whisper.

'You had no part in it?' said Miss Lewiston from the other side.

'What are you reading, Madame?' said Amyot to Madame Fieschi.

'*Amadis de Gaule*, by the Seigneur des Essarts, purveyor-in-ordinary to the King's Artillery.'

'A delightful work,' said the handsome girl, who became famous as la Fosseuse, when she was lady-in-waiting to Queen Margaret of Navarre.

'The style is quite new,' remarked Amyot. 'Shall you adopt such barbarisms?' he asked, turning to Brantôme.

'The ladies like it! What is to be said?' cried Brantôme, going forward to bow to Madame de Guise, who had in her hand Boccaccio's *Famous Ladies*. 'There must be some ladies of your House there, Madame,' said he. 'But Master Boccaccio's mistake was that he did not live in these days; he would have found ample matter to enlarge his volumes.'

'How clever Monsieur de Brantôme is!' said the beautiful Mademoiselle de Limeuil to the Countess Fieschi. 'He came first to us, but he will stay with the Guises.'

'Hush!' said Madame Fieschi, looking at the fair Limeuil. 'Attend to what concerns you——'

The young lady turned to the door. She was expecting Sardini, an Italian nobleman, who subsequently made him marry her after a little accident that overtook her in the Queen's dressing-room, and which procured her the honour of having a queen for her midwife.

'By Saint Alipantin, Mademoiselle Davila seems to grow prettier every morning,' said Monsieur de Robertet, Secretary of State, as he bowed to the Queen-mother's ladies.

The advent of the Secretary of State, though he was exactly as important as a Cabinet Minister in these days, made no sensation whatever.

'If you think that, Monsieur, do lend me the epigram against Messieurs de Guise; I know you have it,' said Mademoiselle Davila to Robertet.

'I have it no longer,' replied the Secretary, going across to speak to Madame de Guise.

'I have it,' said the Comte de Grammont to Mademoiselle Davila; 'but I will lend it you on only one condition.

'On condition——? For shame!' said Madame Fieschi.

'You do not know what I want,' replied Grammont.

'Oh, that is easy to guess,' said la Limeuil.

The Italian custom of calling ladies, as French peasants call their wives, *la* Such-an-one, was at that time the fashion at the Court of France.

'You are mistaken,' the Count replied eagerly; 'what I ask is, that a letter should be delivered to Mademoiselle de Matha, one of the maids on the other side—a letter from my cousin de Jarnac.'

'Do not compromise my maids; I will give it her myself,' said the Countess Fieschi. 'Have you heard any news of what is going on in Flanders?' she asked Cardinal de Tournon. 'Monsieur d'Egmont is at some new pranks, it would seem.'

'He and the Prince of Orange,' said Cypierre, with a highly expressive shrug.

'The Duke of Alva and Cardinal de Granvelle are going there, are they not, Monsieur?' asked Amyot of Cardinal de Tournon, who stood, uneasy and gloomy, between the two groups after his conversation with the Chancellor.

'We, happily, are quiet, and have to defy heresy only on the stage,' said the young Duke, alluding to the part he had played the day before, that of a Knight subduing a Hydra with the word 'Reformation' on its brow.

Catherine de' Medici, agreeing on this point with her daughter-in-law, had allowed a theatre to be constructed in the great hall, which was subsequently used for the meetings of the States at Blois, the hall between the buildings of Louis XII. and those of Francis I.

The Cardinal made no reply, and resumed his walk in the middle of the hall, talking in a low voice to Monsieur de Robertet and the Chancellor. Many persons know

nothing of the difficulties that Secretaryships of State, now transformed into Cabinet Ministries, met with in the course of their establishment, and how hard the Kings of France found it to create them. At that period a Secretary like Robertet was merely a clerk, of hardly any account among the princes and magnates who settled the affairs of State. There were at that time no ministerial functionaries but the Superintendent of Finance, the Chancellor, and the Keeper of the King's Seals. The King granted a seat in the Council, by letters patent, to such of his subjects as might, in his opinion, give useful advice in the conduct of public affairs. A seat in the Council might be given to a president of a law court in the Parlement, to a bishop, to an untitled favourite. Once admitted to the Council, the subject strengthened his position by getting himself appointed to one of the Crown offices to which a salary was attached—the government of a province, a constable's sword, a marshal's baton, the command of the Artillery, the post of High Admiral, the colonelcy of some military corps, the captaincy of the galleys—or often some function at Court, such as that of Grand Master of the Household, then held by the Duc de Guise.

'Do you believe that the Duc de Nemours will marry Françoise?' asked Madame de Guise of the Duc d'Orléans' instructor.

'Indeed, Madame, I know nothing but Latin,' was the reply.

This made those smile who were near enough to hear it. Just then the seduction of Françoise de Rohan by the Duc de Nemours was the theme of every conversation; but as the Duc de Nemours was cousin to the King, and also allied to the House of Valois through his mother, the Guises regarded him as seduced rather than as a seducer. The influence of the House of Rohan was, however, so great, that after Francis II.'s death the

Duc de Nemours was obliged to quit France in consequence of the lawsuit brought against him by the Rohans, which was compromised by the offices of the Guises. His marriage to the Duchesse de Guise, after Poltrot's assassination, may account for the Duchess's question to Amyot, by explaining some rivalry, no doubt, between her and Mademoiselle de Rohan.

'Look, pray, at that party of malcontents,' said the Comte de Grammont, pointing to Messieurs de Coligny, Cardinal de Châtillon, Danville, Thoré, Moret, and several other gentlemen suspected of meddling in the Reformation, who were standing all together between two windows at the lower end of the hall.

'The Huguenots are on the move,' said Cypierre. 'We know that Théodore de Bèze is at Nérac to persuade the Queen of Navarre to declare herself on their side by publicly renouncing the Catholic faith,' he added, with a glance at the Bailli d'Orléans, who was Chancellor to the Queen of Navarre, and a keen observer of the Court.

'She will do it,' said the Bailli d'Orléans drily.

This personage, the Jacques Cœur of his day, and one of the richest middle-class men of his time, was named Groslot, and was envoy from Jeanne d'Albret to the French Court.

'Do you think so?' said the Chancellor of France to the Chancellor of Navarre, quite understanding the full import of Groslot's remark.

'Don't you know,' said the rich provincial, 'that the Queen of Navarre has nothing of the woman in her but her sex? She is devoted to none but manly things; her mind is strong in important matters, and her heart undaunted by the greatest adversities.'

'Monsieur le Cardinal,' said the Chancellor Olivier to Monsieur de Tournon, who had heard Groslot, 'what do you think of such boldness?'

'The Queen of Navarre does well to choose for her

Chancellor a man from whom the House of Lorraine will need to borrow, and who offers the King his house when there is a talk of moving to Orleans,' replied the Cardinal.

The Chancellor and the Cardinal looked at each other, not daring to speak their thoughts; but Robertet expressed them, for he thought it necessary to make a greater display of devotion to the Guises than these great men, since he was so far beneath them.

'It is most unfortunate that the House of Navarre, instead of abjuring the faith of their fathers, do not abjure the spirit of revenge and rebellion inspired by the Connétable de Bourbon. We shall see a repetition of the wars of the Armagnacs and the Bourguignons.'

'No,' said Groslot, 'for there is something of Louis XI. in the Cardinal de Lorraine.'

'And in Queen Catherine too,' observed Robertet.

At this moment Madame Dayelle, Mary Stewart's favourite waiting-woman, crossed the room, and went to the Queen's chamber. The appearance of the waiting-woman made a little stir.

'We shall be admitted directly,' said Madame Fieschi.

'I do not think so,' said the Duchesse de Guise. 'Their Majesties will come out, for a State Council is to be held.'

La Dayelle slipped into the royal chamber after scratching at the door, a deferential custom introduced by Catherine de' Medici, and adopted by the French Court.

'What is the weather like, my dear Dayelle?' asked Queen Mary, putting her fair fresh face out between the curtains.

'Oh! Madame——'

'What is the matter, Dayelle? You might have the bowmen at your heels——'

'Oh! Madame—is the King still sleeping?'

'Yes.'

'We are to leave the castle, and Monsieur le Cardinal desired me to tell you so, that you might suggest it to the King.'

'Do you know why, my good Dayelle?'

'The Reformers mean to carry you off.'

'Oh, this new religion leaves me no peace! I dreamed last night that I was in prison—I who shall wear the united crowns of the three finest kingdoms in the world.'

'Indeed! but, Madame, it was only a dream.'

'Carried off! That would be rather amusing.—But for the sake of religion, and by heretics—horrible!'

The Queen sprang out of bed and seated herself in front of the fireplace in a large chair covered with red velvet, after wrapping herself in a loose black velvet gown handed to her by Dayelle, which she tied about the waist with a silken cord. Dayelle lighted the fire, for the early May mornings are cool on the banks of the Loire.

'Then did my uncles get this news in the course of the night?' the Queen inquired of Dayelle, with whom she was on familiar terms.

'Early this morning Messieurs de Guise were walking on the terrace to avoid being overheard, and received there some messengers arriving in hot haste from various parts of the kingdom where the Reformers are busy. Her Highness the Queen-mother went out with her Italians hoping to be consulted, but she was not invited to join the little council.'

'She must be furious.'

'All the more so because she had a little wrath left over from yesterday,' replied Dayelle. 'They say she was far from rejoiced by the sight of your Majesty in your dress of woven gold and your pretty veil of tan-coloured crape——'

'Leave us now, my good Dayelle; the King is waking. Do not let any one in, not even those who have the *entrée*. There are matters of State in hand, and my uncles will not disturb us.'

'Why, my dear Mary, are you out of bed already? Is it daylight?' said the young King, rousing himself.

'My dear love, while we were sleeping, malignants have been wide awake, and compel us to leave this pleasant home.'

'What do you mean by malignants, my sweetheart? Did we not have the most delightful festival last evening but for the Latin which those gentlemen insisted on dropping into our good French?'

'Oh!' said Mary, 'that is in the best taste, and Rabelais brought Latin into fashion.'

'Ah! you are so learned, and I am only sorry not to be able to do you honour in verse. If I were not King, I would take back Master Amyot from my brother, who is being made so wise——'

'You have nothing to envy your brother for; he writes verses and shows them to me, begging me to show him mine. Be content, you are by far the best of the four, and will be as good a king as you are a charming lover. Indeed, that perhaps is the reason your mother loves you so little. But be easy; I, dear heart, will love you for all the world.'

'It is no great merit in me to love such a perfect Queen,' said the young King. 'I do not know what hindered me from embracing you before the whole Court last night, when you danced the *branle* with tapers. I could see how all the women looked serving-wenches by you, my sweet Marie!'

'For plain prose your language is charming, my dear heart: it is love that speaks, to be sure. And, you know, my dear, that if you were but a poor little page, I should still love you just as much as I now do, and yet it is a good thing to be able to say, "My sweetheart is a King!"'

'Such a pretty arm! Why must we get dressed? I like to push my fingers through your soft hair and tangle your golden curls. Listen, pretty one; I will not

allow you to let your women kiss your fair neck and your pretty shoulders any more! I am jealous of the Scotch mists for having touched them.'

'Will you not come to see my beloved country? The Scotch would love you, and there would be no rebellions, as there are here.'

'Who rebels in our kingdom?' said François de Valois, wrapping himself in his gown, and drawing his wife on to his knee.

'Yes, this is very pretty play,' said she, withdrawing her cheek from his kiss. 'But you have to reign, if you please, my liege.'

'Who talks of reigning?—This morning I want to——'

'Need you say "I want to," when you can do what you will?—That is the language of neither king nor lover. However, that is not the matter on hand—we have important business to attend to.'

'Oh!' said the King, 'it is a long time since we have had any business to do.—Is it amusing?'

'Not at all,' said Mary; 'we must make a move.'

'I will wager, my pretty one, that you have seen one of your uncles, who manage matters so well that, at seventeen, I am a King only in name. I really know not why, since the first Council, I have ever sat at one; they could do everything quite as well by setting a crown on my chair; I see everything through their eyes, and settle matters blindfold.'

'Indeed, Monsieur,' said the Queen, standing up and assuming an air of annoyance, 'you had agreed never again to give me the smallest trouble on that score, but to leave my uncles to exercise your royal power for the happiness of your people. A nice people they are! Why, if you tried to govern them unaided, they would swallow you whole like a strawberry. They need warriors to rule them—a stern master gloved with iron; while you—you are a charmer whom I love just as you

are, and should not love if you were different—do you hear, my lord?' she added, bending down to kiss the boy, who seemed inclined to rebel against this speech, but who was mollified by the caress.

'Oh, if only they were not your uncles!' cried Francis. 'I cannot endure that Cardinal; and when he puts on his insinuating air and his submissive ways, and says to me with a bow, "Sire, the honour of the Crown and the faith of your fathers is at stake, your Majesty will never allow——" and this and that—I am certain he toils for nothing but his cursed House of Lorraine.'

'How well you mimic him!' cried the Queen. 'But why do you not make these Guises inform you of what is going forward, so as to govern by and by on your own account when you are of full age? I am your wife, and your honour is mine. We will reign, sweetheart—never fear! But all will not be roses for us till we are free to please ourselves. There is nothing so hard for a King as to govern!

'Am I the Queen now, I ask you? Do you think that your mother ever fails to repay me in evil for what good my uncles may do for the glory of your throne? And mark the difference! My uncles are great princes, descendants of Charlemagne, full of goodwill, and ready to die for you; while this daughter of a leech, or a merchant, Queen of France by a mere chance, is as shrewish as a citizen's wife who is not mistress in her house. The Italian woman is provoked that she cannot set every one by the ears, and she is always coming to me with her pale, solemn face, and then with her pinched lips she begins: "Daughter, you are the Queen; I am only the second lady in the kingdom"—she is furious, you see, dear heart—"but if I were in your place, I would not wear crimson velvet while the Court is in mourning, and I would appear in public with my hair plainly dressed and with no jewels, for what is unseemly in any lady is even more so in a queen. Nor would I

dance myself; I would only see others dance!" That is the kind of thing she says to me.'

'Oh, dear Heaven!' cried the King, 'I can hear her! Mercy, if she only knew——'

'Why, you still quake before her. She wearies you—say so? We will send her away. By my faith, that she should deceive you might be endured, but to be so tedious——'

'In Heaven's name, be silent, Marie,' said the King, at once alarmed and delighted. 'I would not have you lose her favour.'

'Never fear that she will quarrel with me, with the three finest crowns in the world on my head, my little King,' said Mary Stewart. 'Even though she hates me for a thousand reasons, she flatters me, to win me from my uncles.'

'Hates you?'

'Yes, my angel! And if I had not a thousand such proofs as women can give each other, and such as women only can understand, her persistent opposition to our happy lovemaking would be enough. Now, is it my fault if your father could never endure Mademoiselle de' Medici? In short, she likes me so little, that you had to be quite in a rage to prevent our having separate sets of rooms here and at Saint-Germain. She declared that it was customary for the Kings and Queens of France. Customary!—It was your father's custom; that is quite intelligible. As to your grandfather, Francis, the good man established the practice for the convenience of his love affairs. So be on your guard; if we are obliged to leave this place, do not let the Grand Master divide us.'

'If we leave? But I do not intend to leave this pretty château, whence we see the Loire and all the country around—a town at our feet, the brightest sky in the world above us, and these lovely gardens. Or if I go, it will be to travel with you in Italy and see Raphael's pictures and Saint-Peter's at Rome.'

'And the orange-trees. Ah, sweet little King, if you could know how your Mary longs to walk under orange-trees in flower and fruit! Alas! I may never see one! Oh! to hear an Italian song under those fragrant groves, on the shore of a blue sea, under a cloudless sky, and to clasp each other thus!——'

'Let us be off,' said the King.

'Be off!' cried the Grand Master, coming in. 'Yes, Sire, you must be off from Blois. Pardon my boldness; but circumstances overrule etiquette, and I have come to beg you to call a Council.'

Mary and Francis had started apart on being thus taken by surprise, and they both wore the same expression of offended sovereign Majesty.

'You are too much the Grand Master, Monsieur de Guise,' said the young King, suppressing his wrath.

'Devil take lovers!' muttered the Cardinal in Catherine's ear.

'My son,' replied the Queen-mother, appearing behind the Cardinal, 'the safety of your person is at stake as well as of your kingdom.'

'Heresy was awake while you slept, Sire,' said the Cardinal.

'Withdraw into the hall,' said the little King; 'we will hold a Council.'

'Madame,' said the Duke to the Queen, 'your furrier's son has come with some furs which are seasonable for your journey, as we shall probably ride by the Loire.—But he also wishes to speak with Madame,' he added, turning to the Queen-mother. 'While the King is dressing, would you and Her Majesty dismiss him forthwith, so that this trifle may no further trouble us.'

'With pleasure,' replied Catherine; adding to herself, 'If he thinks to be rid of me by such tricks, he little knows me.'

The Cardinal and the Duke retired, leaving the two

Queens with the King. As he went through the guard-room to go to the council-chamber, the Grand Master desired the usher to bring up the Queen's furrier.

When Christophe saw this official coming towards him from one end of the room to the other, he took him, from his dress, to be some one of importance, and his heart sank within him ; but this sensation, natural enough at the approach of a critical moment, became sheer terror when the usher, whose advance had the effect of directing the eyes of the whole splendid assembly to Christophe with his bundles and his abject looks, said to him—

'Their Highnesses the Cardinal de Lorraine and the Grand Master desire to speak to you in the council-room.'

'Has any one betrayed me?' was the thought of this hapless envoy of the Reformers.

Christophe followed the usher, his eyes bent on the ground, and never looked up till he found himself in the spacious council-room — as large almost as the guard-room. The two Guises were alone, standing in front of the splendid chimney-place that backed against that in the guardroom, where the maids of honour were grouped.

'You have come from Paris? Which road did you take?' the Cardinal said to Christophe.

'I came by water, Monseigneur,' replied the lad.

'And how did you get into Blois?' said the Grand Master.

'By the river port, Monseigneur.'

'And no one interfered with you?' said the Duke, who was examining the young man closely.

'No, Monseigneur. I told the first soldier, who made as though he would stop me, that I had come on duty to wait on the two Queens, and that my father is furrier to their Majesties.'

'What is doing in Paris?' asked the Cardinal.

'They are still trying to discover the murderer who killed President Minard.'

'Are not you the son of my surgeon's greatest friend?' asked the Duc de Guise, deceived by Christophe's expression of candour, now that his fears were allayed.

'Yes, Monseigneur.'

The Grand Master went out, hastily lifted the curtain which screened the double doors of the council-chamber, and showed his face to the crowd, among whom he looked for the King's surgeon-in-chief. Ambroise Paré, standing in a corner, was aware of a glance shot at him by the Duke, and went to him. Ambroise, already inclined to the Reformed religion, ended by adopting it; but the friendship of the Guises and of the French kings preserved him from the various disasters that befell the heretics. The Duke, who felt that he owed his life to Ambroise Paré, had appointed him surgeon-in-chief to the King within a few days past.

'What is it, Monseigneur,' said the leech. 'Is the King ill? I should not be surprised.'

'Why?'

'The Queen is too fascinating,' said the surgeon.

'Ah!' replied the Duke, surprised. 'However, that is not the case,' he went on after a pause. 'Ambroise, I want you to see a friend of yours,' and he led him on to the threshold of the council-chamber door and pointed to Christophe.

'Ah, to be sure,' cried the surgeon, holding out his hand to the youth. 'How is your father, my boy?'

'Very well, Master Ambroise,' Christophe replied.

'And what are you doing at Court?' Paré went on. 'It is not your business to carry parcels; your father wants to make a lawyer of you. Do you want the protection of these two great Princes to become a pleader?'

'Why, yes, indeed,' replied Christophe, 'but for my father's sake; and if you can intercede for us, add your

entreaties,' he went on, with a piteous air, 'to obtain an order from Monseigneur the Grand Master for the payment of the moneys due to my father, for he does not know which way to turn——'

The Cardinal and his brother looked at each other, and seemed to be satisfied.

'Leave us now,' said the Grand Master to Ambroise with a nod.—'And you, my friend,' he added to Christophe, 'settle your business quickly, and get back to Paris. My secretary will give you a pass, for, by Heaven, the roads will not be pleasant to travel on!'

Neither of the brothers had the slightest suspicion of the important interests that lay in Christophe's hands, being now quite assured that he was certainly the son of Lecamus, a good Catholic, purveyor to the Court, and that he had come solely to get his money.

'Take him round to be near the door of the Queen's chamber; she will ask for him no doubt,' said the Cardinal to the surgeon.

While the furrier's son was being thus cross-questioned in the council-room, the King had left his mother and the Queen together, having gone into his dressing-room, which was beyond a room adjoining the bedroom.

Catherine, standing in the recess of the deep window, was looking out on the gardens lost in melancholy thought. She foresaw that one of the greatest commanders of the age, in the course of that morning, in the very next hour, would take the place of her son the King, under the terrible title of Lieutenant-General of the kingdom. In the face of such peril she was alone, without a plan, without defence. Indeed, as she stood there in her mourning, which she had not ceased to wear since the death of Henri II., she might have been compared to a phantom, so still were her pale features as she stood absorbed in thought. Her black eye seemed to wander in the indecision for which great politicians are

so often blamed, which in them is the result of the breadth of sight which enables them to see every difficulty, and to balance one against the other, adding up the sum-total of risk before taking a part. There was a ringing in her ears, a turmoil in her blood; but she stood there, nevertheless, calm and dignified, while gauging the depths of the political abyss beyond the real gulf that lay at her feet.

Since the day when the Vidame de Chartres had been arrested, this was the second of those terrible days of which there were henceforth to be so many in the course of her royal career; but she never again made a mistake in the school of power. Though the sceptre seemed always to fly from her grasp, she meant to seize it, and, in fact, did seize it, by that sheer force of will which had never given way to the scorn of her father-in-law, Francis I., and his Court—by whom, though Dauphiness, she had been so little thought of—nor to the constant denials of Henri II., nor to the unresting antagonism of her rival, Diane de Poitiers. A man would not have understood this Queen in check; but Mary Stewart, so fair, so crafty, so clever, so girlish, and yet so omniscient, watched her out of the corner of her eye while affecting to warble an Italian air with an indifferent countenance. Without understanding the tempest of ambition which brought a cold moisture to the Florentine Queen's brow, the pretty Scotch girl, with her saucy face, knew that the high position of her uncle the Duc de Guise was filling Catherine with suppressed fury. Now, nothing amused her so much as watching her mother-in-law, whom she regarded as an intriguing adventuress, who, having been humbled, was always prepared for revenge. The face of the elder was grave and gloomy, a little cadaverous, by reason of the livid complexion of the Italians, which by daylight looks like yellow ivory, though by candle-light it is dazzling; while the younger face was bright and fresh. At sixteen Mary Stewart had that creamy fairness for which she was so famous. Her bright, rosy

face, with clearly-cut features, sparkled with childish mischief, very frankly expressed in the regular arch of her brows, the brightness of her eyes, and the pert smile of her pretty mouth. She had then in perfection that kittenish grace which nothing—neither captivity nor the sight of the horrible block—ever completely quelled.

Thus these two Queens, one in the morning, the other in the summer of life, were at this time a perfect contrast. Catherine was an imposing sovereign, an impenetrable widow, with no passion but the love of power. Mary was a feather-brained and light-hearted wife, who thought of her crowns as playthings. One looked forward to impending misfortunes; she even had a glimpse of the murder of the Guises, guessing that this would be the only way to strike down men who were capable of raising themselves above the throne and the Parlement; she saw rivers of blood in a long struggle—the other little dreamed that she would herself be murdered by form of law.

A curious reflection brought a little calm to the Italian Queen.

'According to the soothsayer and to Ruggieri's forecast, this reign is soon to end. My difficulties will not last,' thought she.

And thus, strange to say, an occult science, now forgotten—judicial astrology—was a support to Catherine at this juncture, as it was throughout her life; for the belief grew constantly from seeing the predictions of those who practised it realised with the greatest exactitude.

'You are very serious, Madam,' said Mary Stewart, taking from Dayelle's hands her little cap, pinched down over the parting of her hair with two frilled wings of handsome lace beyond the puffs of wavy yellow hair that shadowed her temples.

The painters of the time have so amply perpetuated this cap, that it now belongs essentially to the Queen of Scots, though it was Catherine who invented it when

she went into mourning for Henri II.; but she could not wear it with such good effect as her daughter-in-law, to whom it was infinitely more becoming. And this was not the smallest of the grievances harboured by the Queen-mother against the young Queen.

'Does your Majesty mean that for a reproof?' said Catherine, turning to her daughter-in-law.

'I owe respect, and should not dare——' said the Scotchwoman meaningly, with a glance at Dayelle.

Between the two Queens the favourite waiting-woman stood like the figure-head on a fire-dog; an approving smile might cost her her life.

'How can I be as gay as you after losing the late King, and when I see my son's kingdom on the eve of a conflagration?'

'Politics do not much concern women,' replied Mary Stewart. 'Besides, my uncles are there.'

These two sentences, in the circumstances, were two poisoned arrows.

'Let us see our furs then,' the Italian replied, 'and so turn our minds to our own business, while your uncles settle that of the kingdom.'

'Oh, but we shall attend the Council, Madam; we are of more use there than you suppose.'

'We?' said Catherine, with feigned astonishment. 'I, for my part, do not know Latin!'

'You fancy me so learned?' said Mary Stewart, with a laugh. 'Nay, Madam, I swear to you that at this moment I am studying in the hope of rivalling the Medici and of knowing some day how to heal the wounds of the country.'

This sharp shaft pierced Catherine to the heart, for it was an allusion to the origin of the Medici, who were descended, as some said, from a leech, or, as others had it, from a rich drug merchant. She had no reply ready. Dayelle coloured when her mistress looked to her for the applause which everybody, and even queens,

expect from their inferiors when they have no better audience.

'Your witticisms, Madam, cannot, unfortunately, heal either the maladies of the State or those of the Church,' said Catherine, with calm and dignified coldness. 'My forefathers' knowledge of such matters won them thrones; while you, if you persist in jesting in the midst of danger, are like enough to lose yours.'

At this juncture Dayelle opened the door to Christophe, shown in by the chief physician himself after scratching at the door.

The young Reformer wanted to study Catherine's countenance, and affected a shyness, which was natural enough on finding himself in this place; but he was surprised by Mary's eagerness. She rushed at the boxes to look at her surcoat.

'Madam,' said Christophe, addressing Catherine.

He turned his back on the other Queen and Dayelle, promptly taking advantage of the attention the two were devoting to the furs to strike a bold blow.

'What do you want of me?' asked Catherine, looking keenly at him.

Christophe had placed the agreement proposed by the Prince de Condé, with the Reformer's plan of action and an account of their forces, over his heart, between his cloth jerkin and his shirt, wrapped inside the furrier's bill of what Queen Catherine owed him.

'Madam,' said he, 'my father is in dreadful want of money, and if you would condescend to look through the accounts,' he added, unfolding the paper and slipping the agreement under it, 'you will see that your Majesty owes him six thousand crowns. May your goodness have pity on us! See, Madam.'

And he held out the document.

'Read it. This dates so far back as the accession of the late King.'

Catherine was bewildered by the preamble to the

address, but she did not lose her presence of mind; she hastily rolled up the paper, admiring the young man's readiness and daring. She saw from these masterly tactics that he would understand her, so she tapped him on the head with the roll of paper, and said:—'You are very ill advised, my young friend, in handing the bill in before the furs. Learn some knowledge of women! You must never ask for your money till we are perfectly satisfied.'

'Is that the tradition?' said the young Queen to her mother-in-law, who made no reply.

'Ah, Mesdames, excuse my father,' said Christophe. 'If he had not wanted the money, you would not have your furs. The country is up in arms, and there is so much danger on the roads, that only our great need induced me to come. No one else would risk his life.'

'This lad is quite fresh,' said Mary Stewart, smiling.

It is not superfluous to the better understanding of this important little scene to remark that a surcoat was, as the name implies, a sort of close-fitting jacket or spencer which ladies wore over their dress, and which wrapped them closely, shaped down to the hips. This garment protected the back, chest, and throat from the cold. Surcoats were lined with fur which turned up over the stuff, forming a more or less wide border. Mary Stewart while trying on her surcoat was looking at herself in a large Venetian mirror, to see the effect of it at the back; thus she had left her mother-in-law liberty to glance at the packet of papers, of which the volume might otherwise have excited her suspicions.

'Does a man ever speak to a lady of the dangers he has incurred when he is safe and sound in her presence?' said she, turning round on Christophe.

'Oh, Madam, I have your account too,' said he, looking at her with well-acted simplicity.

The young Queen looked at him from head to foot

without taking the paper; but she observed, without drawing any conclusions at the moment, that he had taken Queen Catherine's bill out of his breast, and drew hers out of his pocket. Nor did she see in the lad's eyes the admiration that her beauty won her from all the world; but she was thinking so much of her surcoat, that she did not at once wonder what could be the cause of his indifference.

'Take it, Dayelle,' said she to the waiting-woman. 'You can give the account to Monsieur de Versailles (Loménie), and desire him, from me, to pay it.'

'Indeed, Madam, but if you do not give me an order signed by the King, or by His Highness the Grand Master, who is at hand, your gracious promise will have no effect.'

'You are rather hastier than beseems a subject, my friend,' said Mary Stewart. 'So you do not believe in royal promises?'

The King came in dressed in his long silk hose and trunks, the breeches of the time, but wore neither doublet nor cloak; he had only a rich wrapper of velvet lined throughout with fur; for wrapper, a word of modern use, can alone describe the *négligé* of his apparel.

'Who is the rascal that doubts your word?' said the young King, who, though at a distance, had heard his wife's speech.

The door of the King's closet was hidden by the bed. This closet was subsequently called the old closet (*le Cabinet vieux*) to distinguish it from the splendid painted closet constructed for Henri III. on the other side of the room adjoining the hall of the States-General. Henri III. hid the assassins in the old closet, and sent to desire the Duc de Guise to attend him there; while he, during the murder, remained concealed in the new closet, whence he emerged only to see this overweening subject die—a subject for whom there could be no

prison, no tribunal, no judges, no laws in the kingdom. But for these dreadful events, the historian could now hardly identify the former uses of these rooms and halls filled with soldiers. A sergeant writes to his sweetheart on the spot where Catherine gravely considered her struggle with parties.

'Come, my boy,' said the Queen-mother; 'I will see that you are paid. Trade must flourish, and money is its main sinew.'

'Ay, go, my good youth,' said the young Queen, laughing; 'my august mother understands matters of trade better than I do.'

Catherine was about to leave the room without replying to this innuendo; but it struck her that her indifference might arouse suspicions, and she retorted on her daughter-in-law—

'And you, my dear, trade in love.'

Then she went downstairs.

'Put all those things away, Dayelle.—And come to the council-room, Sire,' said the young Queen to the King, enchanted at having to decide the important question of the lieutenancy of the kingdom in her mother-in-law's absence.

Mary Stewart took the King's arm. Dayelle went out first, speaking a word to the pages, and one of them —young Téligny, fated to perish miserably on the night of Saint-Bartholomew—shouted out—

'The King.'

On hearing the cry, the two musketeers carried arms, and the two pages led the way towards the council-chamber between the line of courtiers on one side and the line formed by the maids of honour to the two Queens on the other. All the members of the Council then gathered round the door of the hall, which was at no great distance from the staircase. The Grand Master, the Cardinal, and the Chancellor advanced to meet the two young sovereigns, who smiled to some of

the maids, or answered the inquiries of some of the Court favourites more intimate than the rest.

The Queen, however, evidently impatient, dragged Francis II. on towards the vast council-room. As soon as the heavy thud of the arquebuses dropping on the floor again announced that the royal pair had gone in, the pages put on their caps, and the conversations in the various groups took their course again on the gravity of the business about to be discussed.

'Chiverni was sent to fetch the Connétable, and he has not come,' said one.

'There is no prince of the blood present,' remarked another.

The Chancellor and Monsieur de Tournon looked anxious.

'The Grand Master has sent word to the Keeper of the Seals to be sure not to fail to attend this Council; a good many letters patent will be issued, no doubt.'

'How is it that the Queen-mother remains below, in her own rooms, at such a juncture?'

'They are going to make things hot for us,' said Groslot to Cardinal de Chatillon.

In short, every one had something to say. Some were pacing the room from end to end, others were flitting round the maids of honour, as though it could be possible to catch a few words through a wall three feet thick, or two doors and the heavy curtains that screened them.

The King, seated at one end of the long table covered with blue velvet, which stood in the middle of the room, his young Queen in an armchair at his side, was waiting for his mother. Robertet was mending his pens. The two Cardinals, the Grand Master, the Chancellor, the Keeper of the Seals—in short, the whole assembly, looked at the little King, wondering why he did not give the word for them all to be seated.

'Are we to sit in council in the absence of the Queen-

mother?' the Chancellor asked, addressing the young King.

The two Guises ascribed Catherine's absence to some cunning trick of their niece's. Then, spurred by a significant look, the much daring Cardinal said to the King—

'Is it your Majesty's goodwill that we should proceed without Madam your mother?'

Francis, not daring to have an opinion of his own, replied—

'Gentlemen, be seated.'

The Cardinal briefly pointed out the dangers of the situation. This great politician, who showed astounding skill in this business, broached the question of the lieutenancy amid utter silence. The young King was, no doubt, conscious of an awkwardness, and guessed that his mother had a real sense of the rights of the Crown, and a knowledge of the danger that threatened his power, for he replied to a direct question on the Cardinal's part—

'We will wait for my mother.'

Enlightened by this inexplicable delay on Queen Catherine's part, Mary Stewart suddenly recalled in a single flash of thought three incidents which were clear in her memory. In the first place, the bulk of the packet presented to her mother-in-law, which she had seen, though so inattentive at the moment (for a woman who seems to see nothing is still a lynx), then the place where Christophe had carried them to separate them from hers.

'Why?' she said to herself. And then she remembered the boy's cold look, which she at once ascribed to the Reformers' hatred of the Guises' niece. A voice within her cried, 'Is he not an envoy from the Huguenots?'

Acting, as all hasty persons do, on the first impulse, she exclaimed—

'I myself will go and fetch my mother.'

She rushed away and down the stairs, to the great amazement of the gentlemen and ladies of the Court. She went down to her mother-in-law's rooms, crossed the guardroom, opened the door of the bedroom as stealthily as a thief, crept noiselessly over the carpet as silently as a shadow, and could see her nowhere. Then she thought she could surprise her in the splendid private room between the bedroom and the oratory. The arrangement of this oratory is perfectly recognisable to this day; the fashion of the time then allowed it to serve all the purposes in private life which are now served by a boudoir.

By a piece of good-fortune, quite unaccountable when we see in how squalid a state the Crown has left this château, the beautiful panelling of Catherine's closet exists to this day; in the fine carving the curious may still discern traces of Italian magnificence, and discover the hiding-places the Queen-mother had contrived there.

A somewhat exact description of these curiosities is indeed indispensable to a comprehension of the scene that took place there. The woodwork at that time consisted of about a hundred and eighty small oblong panels, of which a hundred or so still remain, each carved with a different design, obviously suggested by the most elegant Italian arabesques. The wood is holm-oak; the red ground which is found under the coat of limewash, applied at the time of the cholera—a quite useless precaution—shows plainly that these panels were gilt; and in spots where the whitewash has rubbed off we see that some portions of the design were in colour, blue, red, or green against the gold background. The number of these panels shows an evident intention to cheat investigation; but if there could be a doubt, the keeper of the château, while holding up Catherine's memory to the execration of all living men, shows to

visitors, at the bottom of the panelling, and on a level with the floor, a somewhat heavy skirting which can be raised, and under which there are a number of ingenious springs. By pressing a knob thus concealed, the Queen could open certain of these panels, known to her alone, behind which lay a hiding-place of the same oblong shape as the panels, but of varying depth. To this day a practised hand would find it difficult to detect which of these panels would open on its invisible hinges; and when the eye was diverted by the skilfully combined colours and gilding that covered the cracks, it is easy to imagine that it was impossible to discover one or two panels among nearly two hundred.

At the moment when Mary Stewart laid her hand on the somewhat elaborate latch of the door to the closet, the Italian Queen, having convinced herself already of the importance of the Prince de Condé's schemes, had just pressed the spring hidden by the skirting, one of the panels had fallen open, and Catherine had turned to the table to take up the papers and hide them, to turn her attention to the safeguard of the devoted messenger who had brought them to her. When she heard the door open, she at once guessed that no one but Queen Mary would venture to come in unannounced.

'You are lost,' she said to Christophe, seeing that she could neither hide the papers nor close the panel promptly enough to preserve the secret of her hiding-place.

Christophe's only reply was a sublime look.

'*Povero mio!*' said Catherine, before turning to her daughter-in-law. 'Treason, Madam!' she exclaimed. 'I have them fast! Send for the Cardinal and the Duke. And be sure,' she added, pointing to Christophe, 'that this fellow does not escape!'

Thus in an instant this masterful woman saw that it would be necessary to give up the hapless young man; she could not hide him, it was impossible to help him to

escape ; and besides, though a week ago he might have been saved, now the Guises had, since that morning, been aware of the conspiracy, and they too must have the lists which she held in her hand, and were drawing all the Reformers into a trap. And so, pleased at finding her adversaries in the mind she had hoped for, now that the plot had become known, policy required her to assume the merit of discovering it.

These dreadful considerations flashed through her mind in the brief moment while the young Queen was opening the door. Mary Stewart stood silent for an instant. Her expression lost its brightness and assumed that keenness which suspicion always gives the eye, and which in her was terrible by the sudden contrast. She looked from Christophe to the Queen-mother, and from the Queen-mother to Christophe, with a glance of malignant doubt. Then she snatched up a bell, which brought in one of Catherine's maids of honour.

'Mademoiselle du Rouet, send in the captain of the Guard,' said Mary Stewart, in breach of every law of etiquette, necessarily set aside in such circumstances.

While the young Queen gave her order, Catherine stood looking at Christophe as much as to say, 'Courage!' The young Reformer understood, and replied by an expression which conveyed, 'Sacrifice me, as they have sacrificed me!'

'Put your trust in me,' Catherine answered by a gesture.

Then when her daughter-in-law turned upon her, she was deeply engaged in examining the papers.

'You are of the Reformed religion?' said Mary Stewart to Christophe.

'Yes, Madam.'

'Then I was not mistaken,' she muttered to herself, as she read in the young man's eyes the same expression in which coldness and aversion lurked behind a look of humility.

Pardaillan appeared at once, sent down by the two Princes of Lorraine and the King. The captain sent for by Mary Stewart followed this young man—a most devoted adherent of the Guises.

'Go from me to the King, beg him, with the Cardinal and the Grand Master, to come here at once, and tell them I would not take such a liberty but that something of serious importance has occurred.—Go, Pardaillan.—And you, Lewiston, keep guard over this Reformed traitor,' she added to the Scotchman in their native tongue, pointing to Christophe.

The two Queens did not speak till the King came. It was a terrible pause. Mary Stewart had shown her mother-in-law the whole extent of the part her uncles made her play; her unsleeping and habitual distrust stood revealed; and her youthful conscience felt how disgraceful such a part must be to a great Queen. Catherine, on her side, had betrayed herself in her alarm, and feared that she had been understood; she was trembling for the future. The two women, one ashamed and furious, the other vicious but calm, withdrew into the window bay, one leaning on the right side, the other on the left; but their looks were so expressive, that each turned away, and with a common instinct looked out of the window at the sky. These two women, clever as they were, at that moment had no more wit than the commonest. Perhaps it is always so when circumstances overpower men. There is always a moment when even genius is conscious of its smallness in the presence of a great catastrophe.

As for Christophe, he felt like a man falling into an abyss. Lewiston, the Scotch captain, listened to the silence, looking at the furrier's son and the two Queens with a soldier's curiosity. The King's entrance put an end to this painful situation.

The Cardinal went straight up to Queen Catherine.

'I have in my hand all the threads of the plot hatched

by the heretics; they sent this boy to me carrying this treaty and these documents,' said Catherine in an undertone.

While Catherine was explaining matters to the Cardinal, Queen Mary was speaking a few words in the Grand Master's ear.

'What is this all about?' asked the young King, standing alone amid this conflict of violent interests.

'The proofs of what I was telling your Majesty are already to hand,' said the Cardinal, seizing the papers.

The Duc de Guise, unmindful of the fact that he was interrupting him, drew his brother aside and said in a whisper—

'This then makes me Lieutenant-General without any opposition.'

A keen glance was the Cardinal's only reply, by which he conveyed to his brother that he had already appreciated the advantages to be derived from Catherine's false position.

'Who sent you?' asked the Duke of Christophe.

'Chaudieu the preacher,' he replied.

'Young man, you lie,' said the Duke roughly. 'It was the Prince de Condé.'

'The Prince de Condé, Monseigneur,' replied Christophe, with a look of surprise. 'I never saw him. I belong to the Palais. I am working under Monsieur de Thou. I am his clerk, and he does not know that I have joined the religion. I only submitted to the preacher's entreaties.'

'That will do,' said the Cardinal.—'Call Monsieur de Robertet,' he added to Lewiston, 'for this young villain is craftier than old politicians. He has taken us in, my brother and me, when we should have given him the Host without confession.'

'You are no child, by Heaven!' cried the Duke, 'and you shall be treated as a man.'

'They hoped to win over your august mother,' said

the Cardinal, turning to the King, and trying to lead him aside to bring him to his way of thinking.

'Alas!' replied Catherine, speaking to her son with a reproachful air, and stopping him just as the Cardinal was taking him into the oratory to subjugate him with dangerous eloquence, 'you here see the effect of the position I am placed in. I am supposed to rebel against my lack of influence in public affairs—I, the mother of four princes of the House of Valois.'

The young King prepared to listen. Mary Stewart, seeing his brow knit, led him off into the window recess, where she cajoled him with gentle speeches in a low voice; much the same, no doubt, as those she had lavished on him when he rose.

The two brothers meanwhile read the papers handed over to them by the Queen-mother. Finding in them much information of which their spies and Monsieur de Braguelonne, the governor of the Châtelet, knew nothing, they were inclined to believe in Catherine's good faith. Robertet came in and had private instructions with regard to Christophe. The hapless tool of the leaders of the Reformation was led away by four men of the Scotch Guard, who took him downstairs and handed him over to Monsieur de Montrésor, the Provost of the château. This terrible personage himself escorted Christophe with five or six sergeants to the prison situated in the vaulted cellars of the now ruined tower, which the verger of the château of Blois shows the visitor, and says that these were the *oubliettes*.

After such an event the Council could only be an empty form: the King, the young Queen, the Grand Master, and the Cardinal de Lorraine went back to the council-room, taking with them Catherine, quite conquered, who only spoke to approve of the measures demanded by the Guises. In spite of some slight opposition on the part of the Chancellor Olivier, the only person to utter a word suggesting the independence

needful to the exercise of his functions, the Duc de Guise was appointed Lieutenant-General of the kingdom. Robertet carried the motions with a promptitude arguing such devotion as might be well called complicity.

The King, with his mother on his arm, once more crossed the guardroom, and announced to the Court that he proposed to move to Amboise on the following day. This royal residence had been unused since Charles VIII. had very involuntarily killed himself there by striking his head against the pediment of a door that was being carved for him, believing that he could pass under the scaffolding without bending his head. Catherine, to mask the schemes of the Guises, had announced her intention of finishing the château of Amboise on behalf of the Crown at the same time as her own château of Chenonceaux. But no one was deceived by this pretence, and the Court anticipated strange events.

After spending about two hours in accustoming himself to the darkness of his dungeon, Christophe found that it was lined with boards, clumsy indeed, but thick enough to make the square box healthy and habitable. The door, like that into a pig-sty, had compelled him to bend double to get into it. On one side of this trap a strong iron grating admitted a little air and light from the passage. This arrangement, exactly like that of the crypts at Venice, showed very plainly that the architect of the château of Blois belonged to the Venetian school, which gave so many builders to Europe in the Middle Ages. By sounding the walls above the woodwork, Christophe discovered that the two walls which divided this cell from two others, to the right and left, were built of brick; and as he knocked, to estimate the thickness of the wall, he was not a little surprised to hear some one knocking on the other side.

'Who are you?' asked his neighbour, speaking into the corridor.

'I am Christophe Lecamus.'

'And I,' said the other voice, 'am Captain Chaudieu. I was caught this evening at Beaugency; but, happily, there is nothing against me.'

'Everything is discovered,' said Christophe; 'so you are saved from the worst of it.'

'We have three thousand men at this present time in the forests of Vendômois, all men determined enough to seize the Queen-mother and the King on their journey. Happily, la Renaudie was cleverer than I; he escaped. You had just set out when the Guisards caught us.'

'But I know nothing of la Renaudie.'

'Pooh! my brother told me everything,' replied the captain.

On hearing this, Christophe went back to his bench and made no further reply to anything the so-called captain could say to him, for he had had enough experience of the law to know how necessary it was to be cautious in prison.

In the middle of the night he saw the pale gleam of a lantern in the passage, after hearing the unlocking of the ponderous bolts that closed the iron door of the cellar. The provost himself had come to fetch Christophe. This attention to a man who had been left in the dungeon without food struck Christophe as strange; but the upset at Court had, no doubt, led to his being forgotten. One of the provost's sergeants bound his hands with a cord, which he held till they had reached one of the low rooms in Louis XII.'s part of the château, which evidently was the ante-room to the apartments of some person of importance. The sergeant and the provost bid him be seated on a bench, where the sergeant tied his feet as he had already tied his hands. At a sign from Monsieur de Montrésor, the sergeant then left them.

'Now listen to me, my young friend,' said the provost to Christophe, and the lad observed that he was in full dress at that hour of the night, for his fingers fidgeted with the collar of his Order. This circumstance made the furrier's son thoughtful; he saw that there was more to come. At this moment, certainly, they could not be going either to try him or to hang him.

'My young friend, you may spare yourself much suffering by telling me here and now all you know of the communications between Queen Catherine and Monsieur de Condé. Not only will you not be hurt, but you will be taken into the service of Monseigneur, the Lieutenant-General of the kingdom, who likes intelligent people, and who was favourably impressed by your looks. The Queen-mother is to be packed off to Florence, and Monsieur de Condé will no doubt stand his trial. So, take my word for it, small men will do well to attach themselves to the great men in power.—Tell me everything, and it will be to your advantage.'

'Alas, Monsieur,' replied Christophe, 'I have nothing to say. I have confessed all I know to Messieurs de Guise in the Queen's room. Chaudieu persuaded me to place those papers in the hands of the Queen-mother, by making me believe that the peace of the country was involved.'

'You never saw the Prince de Condé?'

'Never,' said Christophe.

Thereupon Monsieur de Montrésor left Christophe and went into an adjoining room.

Christophe was not long left to himself. The door by which he had entered soon opened for several men to pass in, who did not shut it, letting various far from pleasant sounds come in from the courtyard. Blocks of wood and instruments were brought in, evidently intended to torture the Reformers' messenger. Christophe's curiosity soon found matter for reflection in the preparations the new-comers were making under his very eyes.

Two coarse and poorly-clad varlets obeyed the orders of a powerful and thick-set man, who, on coming in, had a look at Christophe like that of a cannibal at his victim; he had scrutinised him from head to foot, taking stock of his sinews, of their strength and power of resistance, with the calculating eye of a connoisseur. This man was the Blois executioner. Backwards and forwards several times, his men brought in a mattress, wooden wedges, planks, and other objects, of which the use seemed neither obvious nor hopeful to the unhappy boy for whom the preparations were being made, and whose blood ran cold in his veins with apprehension, which though vague was appalling. Two other men came in when Monsieur de Montrésor reappeared.

'What, is nothing ready yet?' said the chief provost, to whom the two new-comers bowed respectfully. 'Do you know,' he went on to the big man and his two satellites, 'that Monsieur le Cardinal supposes you to be getting on with your work?—Doctor,' he added, turning to one of the new-comers, 'here is your man,' and he pointed to Christophe.

The doctor went up to the prisoner, untied his hands, and sounded his back and chest. Science quite seriously repeated the torturer's investigation. Meanwhile, a servant in the livery of the House of Guise brought in several chairs, a table, and all the materials for writing.

'Begin your report,' said Monsieur de Montrésor to the second person who had come in, dressed in black, who was a clerk.

Then he came back to stand by Christophe, to whom he said very mildly—

'My boy, the Chancellor, having learnt that you refuse to give satisfactory replies to my questions, has decided that you must be put to the torture—ordinary and extraordinary.

'Is he in good health, and can he bear it?' the clerk asked of the doctor.

'Yes,' said the man of medicine, a physician attached to the House of Lorraine.

'Well, then, retire to the adjoining room; we will send for you if it is necessary to consult you.'

The physician left the room.

His first panic past, Christophe collected all his courage. The hour of his martyrdom was come. He now looked on with cold curiosity at the arrangements made by the executioner and his varlets. After hastily making up a bed, they proceeded to prepare a machine called the boot, consisting of boards, between which each leg of the victim was placed, surrounded with pads. The machinery used by bookbinders to press the volumes between two boards, which they tighten with cords, will give a very exact idea of the way in which each leg was encased. It is easy, then, to imagine the effect of a wedge driven home by a mallet between the two cases in which the legs were confined, and which, being tightly bound with rope, could not yield. The wedges were driven in at the knees and ankles, as if to split a log of wood. The choice of these two spots where there is least flesh, and where, in consequence, the wedge found room at the expense of the bones, made this form of torture horribly painful. In ordinary torture four wedges were driven in—two at the knees and two at the ankles; in extraordinary torture as many as eight were employed, if the physician pronounced that the victim's powers of endurance were not exhausted.

At this period the boots were also applied to the hands; but as time pressed, the Cardinal, the Lieutenant-General of the kingdom, and the Chancellor spared Christophe this.

The preamble to the examination was written; the provost himself had dictated a few sentences, walking about the room with a meditative air, and requiring Christophe to tell him his name—Christian name—age, and profession; then he asked him from whom he

had received the papers he had delivered to the Queen.

'From Chaudieu the minister,' said he.

'Where did he give them to you?'

'At my own home in Paris.'

'When he handed them to you, he must have told you whether the Queen-mother would receive you well.'

'He told me nothing of the kind,' replied Christophe. 'He only desired me to give them secretly to Queen Catherine.'

'Then have you often seen Chaudieu, that he knew that you were coming here?'

'It was not from me that he heard that I was to carry the furs to the two Queens, and at the same time to ask in my father's behalf for the money owed him by the Queen-mother; nor had I time to ask him who had told him.'

'But those papers, given to you without any wrapper or seal, contain a treaty between the rebels and Queen Catherine. You must have known that they exposed you to the risk of suffering the punishment dealt out to those who are implicated in a rebellion.'

'Yes.'

'The persons who induced you to commit an act of high treason must have promised you some reward and the Queen-mother's patronage.'

'I did it out of attachment to Chaudieu, the only person I saw.'

'Then you persist in declaring that you did not see the Prince de Condé?'

'Yes.'

'Did not the Prince de Condé tell you that the Queen-mother was inclined to enter into his views in antagonism to the Guises?'

'I did not see him.'

'Take care. One of your accomplices, la Renaudie, is arrested. Strong as he is, he could not resist the

torture that awaits you, and at last confessed that he, as well as the Prince, had had speech with you. If you wish to escape the anguish of torture, I beg you to tell the simple truth. Then perhaps you may win your pardon.'

Christophe replied that he could not tell anything of which he had no knowledge, nor betray accomplices, when he had none. On hearing this, the provost nodded to the executioner, and went back into the adjoining room.

On seeing this, Christophe knit his brows, wrinkling his forehead with a nervous spasm, and preparing to endure. He clenched his fists with such a rigid clutch that the nails ran into the flesh without his feeling it. The three men took him up, carried him to the camp bed, and laid him there, his legs hanging down. While the executioner tied him fast with stout ropes, his two men each fitted a leg into a boot; the cords were tightened by means of a wrench without giving the victim any great pain. When each leg was thus held in a vice, the executioner took up his mallet and his wedges, and looked alternately at the sufferer and the clerk.

'Do you persist in your denial?' said the clerk.

'I have told the truth,' replied Christophe.

'Then go on,' said the clerk, shutting his eyes.

The cords were tightened to the utmost, and this moment, perhaps, was the most agonising of all the torture; the flesh was so suddenly compressed that the blood was violently thrown back into the trunk. The poor boy could not help screaming terribly; he seemed about to faint. The doctor was called back. He felt Christophe's pulse, and desired the executioner to wait for a quarter of an hour before driving in the wedges, to give time for the blood to recover its circulation and sensation to return.

The clerk charitably told Christophe that if he could

not better endure even the beginnings of the suffering he could not escape, he would do better to reveal all he knew; but Christophe's only reply was—

'The King's tailor! the King's tailor!'

'What do you mean by saying that?' asked the clerk.

'Foreseeing the torments I shall go through,' said Christophe, slowly, to gain time and to rest, 'I am summoning all my strength, and trying to reinforce it by remembering the martyrdom endured for the sacred cause of the Reformation by the late King's tailor, who was tortured in the presence of the King and of Madame de Valentinois; I will try to be worthy of him!'

While the physician was advising the hapless man not to drive his torturers to extremities, the Cardinal and the Duke, impatient to know the results of this examination, came in and desired Christophe to reveal the truth at once. The furrier's son repeated the only confession he would allow himself to make, implicating nobody but Chaudieu.

The Princes nodded. On this, the executioner and his foreman seized their mallets, each took a wedge and drove it home between the boots, one standing on the right, and the other on the left. The executioner stood at the knees, the assistant at the ankles, opposite. The eyes of the witnesses of this hideous act were fixed on Christophe's, who, excited no doubt by the presence of these grand personages, flashed such a look at them that his eyes sparkled like flame

At the two next wedges a horrible groan escaped him. Then when he saw the men take up the wedges for the severer torture, he remained silent; but his gaze assumed such dreadful fixity, and flashed at the two Princes such a piercing magnetic fluid, that the Duke and the Cardinal were both obliged to look down. Philippe le Bel had experienced the same defeat when he presided at the torture by hammer, inflicted in his presence on the Templars. This consisted in hitting the victim on

the chest with one arm of the balanced hammer used to coin money, which was covered with a leather pad. There was one knight whose eyes were so fixed on the King that he was fascinated, and could not take his gaze off the sufferer. At the third blow the King rose and went away, after hearing himself called upon to appear before the judgment of God within a year—as he did.

At the fifth wedge, the first of the greater torture, Christophe said to the Cardinal—

'Cut my misery short, Monseigneur; it is useless.'

The Cardinal and the Duke withdrew, and Christophe could hear from the next room these words, spoken by Queen Catherine—

'Go on, go on; after all, he is only a heretic!'

She thought it prudent to appear more severe to her accomplice than his executioners were.

The sixth and seventh wedge were driven in, and Christophe complained no more, his face shone with a strange radiance, due, no doubt, to the immense strength he derived from fanatical excitement. In what else but in feeling can we hope to find the fulcrum enabling a man to endure such anguish? At last, when the executioner was about to insert the eighth wedge, Christophe smiled. This dreadful torment had lasted one hour.

The clerk went to fetch the leech, to know whether the eighth wedge could be driven in without endangering the sufferer's life. The Duke meanwhile came in again to see Christophe.

'By our Lady! you are a fine fellow,' said he, leaning down to speak in his ear. 'I like a brave man. Enter my service, you shall be happy and rich, my favours will heal your bruised limbs; I will ask you to do nothing cowardly, like rejoining your own party to betray their plans; there are always plenty of traitors, and the proof is to be found in the prisons of Blois.

Only tell me on what terms are the Queen-mother and the Prince de Condé.'

'I know nothing about it, Monseigneur,' cried Lecamus.

The doctor came in, examined the victim, and pronounced that he could bear the eighth wedge.

'Drive it in,' said the Cardinal. 'After all, as the Queen says, he is only a heretic,' he added, with a hideous smile at Christophe.

Catherine herself slowly came in from the adjoining room, stood in front of Christophe, and gazed at him coldly. She was the object of attentive scrutiny to the two brothers, who looked alternately at the Queen-mother and her accomplice. The whole future life of this ambitious woman depended on this solemn scrutiny; she felt the greatest admiration for Christophe's courage, and she looked at him sternly; she hated the Guises, and she smiled upon them.

'Come,' said she, 'young man, confess that you saw the Prince de Condé; you will be well rewarded.'

'Oh, Madam, what a part you are playing!' cried Christophe, in pity for her.

The Queen started.

'He is insulting me! Is he not to be hanged?' said she to the two brothers, who stood lost in thought.

'What a woman!' cried the Grand Master, who was consulting his brother in the window recess.

'I will stay in France and be revenged,' thought the Queen. 'Proceed, he must confess or let him die!' she exclaimed, addressing Monsieur de Montrésor.

The provost turned away, the executioners were busy, Catherine had an opportunity of giving the martyr a look, which no one else saw, and which fell like dew on Christophe. The great Queen's eyes seemed to glisten with moisture; they were, in fact, full of tears, two tears at once repressed and dry. The wedge was driven home, one of the boards between which it was inserted split.

Christophe uttered a piercing cry; then his face became radiant; he thought he was dying.

'Let him die,' said the Cardinal, echoing Queen Catherine's words with a sort of irony. 'No, no,' he added to the provost, 'do not let us lose this clue.'

The Duke and the Cardinal held a consultation in a low voice.

'What is to be done with him?' asked the executioner.

'Send him to prison at Orleans,' said the Duke.—'And, above all,' he said to Monsieur de Montrésor, 'do not hang him without orders from me.'

The excessive sensitiveness of every internal organ, strung to the highest pitch by the endurance which worked upon every nerve in his frame, no less affected every sense in Christophe. He alone heard these words spoken by the Duc de Guise in the Cardinal's ear—

'I have not given up all hope of hearing the truth from this little man.'

As soon as the two Princes had left the room, the executioners unpacked the victim's legs, with no attempt at gentle handling.

'Did you ever see a criminal with such fortitude?' said the head man to his assistants. The rogue has lived through the infliction of the eighth wedge; he ought to have died. I am the loser of the price of his body.'

'Untie me without hurting me, my good friends,' said poor Christophe. 'Some day I will reward you.'

'Come, show some humanity,' said the doctor. 'Monseigneur the Duke esteems the young man, and commended him to my care,' cried the leech.

'I am off to Amboise with my men,' said the executioner roughly. 'Take care of him yourself. And here is the gaoler.'

The executioner went off, leaving Christophe in the hands of the smooth-spoken doctor, who, with the help of Christophe's warder, lifted him on to a bed, gave him

some broth, which he made him swallow, sat down by his side, felt his pulse, and tried to comfort him.

'You are not dying,' he said, 'and you must feel a comfort to your mind when you reflect that you have done your duty. The Queen charged me to take good care of you,' he added, in a low voice.

'The Queen is very good,' said Christophe, in whom acute anguish had developed wonderful lucidity of mind, and who, after enduring so much, was determined not to spoil the results of his devotion. 'But she might have saved me so much suffering by not delivering me to my tormentors, and by telling them herself the secrets, of which I know nothing.'

On hearing this reply, the doctor put on his cap and cloak and left Christophe to his fate, thinking it vain to hope to gain anything from a man of that temper. The gaoler had the poor boy carried on a litter by four men to the town prison, where Christophe fell asleep, in that deep slumber which, it is said, comes upon almost every mother after the dreadful pains of childbirth.

The two Princes of Lorraine, when they transferred the Court to Amboise, had no hope of finding there the leader of the Reformed party, the Prince de Condé, whom they had ordered to appear in the King's name to take him in a snare. As a vassal of the Crown, and as a Prince of the Blood, Condé was bound to obey the behest of the King. Not to come to Amboise would be a felony ; but, by coming, he would place himself in the power of the Crown. Now, at this moment, the Crown, the Council, the Court, and every kind of power, were in the hands of the Duc de Guise and the Cardinal de Lorraine.

In this difficult dilemma, the Prince de Condé showed the spirit of decisiveness and astuteness, which made him a worthy representative of Jeanne d'Albret and the brave General of the Reformers' forces. He travelled at the

heels of the last conspirators to Vendôme to support them in case of success. But when this first rush to arms ended in the brief skirmish in which the flower of the nobility whom Calvin had misled all perished, the Prince, and a following of fifty gentlemen, arrived at the château d'Amboise the very day after this affair, which the Guises, with crafty policy, spoke of as the riots at Amboise. On hearing of the Prince's advance, the Duke sent out the Maréchal de Saint-André to receive him with an escort of a hundred men-at-arms. When the Béarnais came to the gate of the château, the marshal in command refused to admit the Prince's suite.

'You must come in alone, sir,' said the Chancellor Olivier, Cardinal de Tournon, and Birague, who awaited him outside the portcullis.

'And why?'

'You are suspected of felony,' replied the Chancellor.

The Prince, who saw that his party was being cut off by the Duc de Nemours, quietly replied—

'If that is the case, I will go in to my cousin alone and prove my innocence.'

He dismounted and conversed with perfect freedom with Birague, Tournon, the Chancellor Olivier, and the Duc de Nemours, from whom he asked details of the riot.

'Monseigneur,' said the Duc de Nemours, 'the rebels had sympathisers inside Amboise. Captain Lanoue had got in some men-at-arms, who opened the gate to them through which they got into the town, and of which they had the command——'

'That is to say, you got them into a sack,' replied the Prince, looking at Birague.

'If they had been supported by the attack that was to have been made on the Porte des Bons-Hommes by Captain Chaudieu, the preacher's brother, they would have succeeded,' said the Duc de Nemours, 'but, from the position I had taken up, in obedience to the Duc de Guise, Captain Chaudieu was obliged to make a detour

to avoid fighting me. Instead of arriving at night like the rest, that rebel did not come up till daybreak, just as the King's troops had crushed those who had got into the town.'

'And you had a reserve to recapture the gate that had been given up to them?'

'Monsieur le Maréchal de Saint-André was on the spot with five hundred men.'

The Prince warmly praised these military manœuvres.

'To have acted thus,' said he in conclusion, 'the Lieutenant-General must have known the Reformers' secrets. They have evidently been betrayed.'

The Prince was treated with greater strictness at each step. After being parted from his followers on entering the château, the Cardinal and the Chancellor stood in his way when he turned to the stairs leading to the King's apartments.

'We are instructed by the King, sir, to conduct you to your own rooms.'

'Am I then a prisoner?'

'If that were the King's purpose, you would not be attended by a Prince of the Church and by me,' replied the Chancellor.

The two functionaries led the Prince to an apartment where a guard—of honour so called—was allotted to him, and where he remained for several hours without seeing any one. From his window he looked out on the Loire, the rich country which makes such a beautiful valley between Amboise and Tours, and he was meditating on his situation, wondering what the Guises might dare to do to his person, when he heard the door of his room open, and saw the King's fool come in, Chicot, who had once been in his service.

'I heard you were in disgrace,' said the Prince.

'You cannot think how sober the Court has become since the death of Henri II.'

'And yet the King loves to laugh, surely.'

'Which King? Francis II. or Francis of Lorraine?'

'Are you so fearless of the Duke that you speak so?'

'He will not punish me for that, Sir,' replied Chicot, smiling.

'And to what do I owe the honour of this visit?'

'Was it not due to you after your coming here? I have brought you my cap and bauble.'

'I cannot get out then?'

'Try!'

'And if I do get out?'

'I will confess that you have won the game by playing against the rules.'

'Chicot, you frighten me.—Have you been sent by some one who is interested in my fate?'

Chicot nodded 'Yes.' He went nearer to the Prince, and conveyed to him that they were watched and overheard.

'What have you to say to me?' asked Monsieur de Condé.

'That nothing but daring can get you out of the scrape,' said the fool, whispering the words into his ear. 'And this is from the Queen-mother.'

'Tell those who have sent you,' replied the Prince, 'that I should never have come to this château if I had anything to blame myself for, or to fear.'

'I fly to carry your bold reply,' said the fool.

Two hours later, at one in the afternoon, before the King's dinner, the Chancellor and Cardinal de Tournon came to fetch the Prince to conduct him to Francis II. in the great hall where the Council had sat. There, before all the Court, the Prince de Condé affected surprise at the cool reception the King had given him, and he asked the reason.

'You are accused, cousin,' said the Queen-mother sternly, 'of having meddled with the plots of the Reformers, and you must prove yourself a faithful

subject and a good Catholic if you wish to avert the King's anger from your House.'

On hearing this speech, spoken by Catherine in the midst of hushed silence, as she stood with her hand in the King's arm and with the Duc d'Orléans on her left hand, the Prince de Condé drew back three steps, and with an impulse of dignified pride laid his hand on his sword, looking at the persons present.

'Those who say so, Madam, lie in their throat!' he exclaimed in angry tones.

He flung his glove at the King's feet, saying—

'Let the man who will maintain his calumny stand forth!'

A shiver ran through the whole Court when the Duc de Guise was seen to quit his place; but instead of picking up the glove as they expected, he went up to the intrepid hunchback.

'If you need a second, Prince, I beg of you to accept my services,' said he. 'I will answer for you, and will show the Reformers how greatly they deceive themselves if they hope to have you for their leader.'

The Prince de Condé could not help offering his hand to the Lieutenant-General of the kingdom. Chicot picked up the glove and restored it to Monsieur de Condé.

'Cousin,' said the boy-King, 'you should never draw your sword but in defence of your country.—Come to dinner.'

The Cardinal de Lorraine, puzzled by his brother's action, led him off to their rooms. The Prince de Condé, having weathered the worst danger, gave his hand to Queen Mary Stewart to lead her to the dining-room; but, while making flattering speeches to the young Queen, he was trying to discern what snare was at this moment being laid for him by the Balafré's policy. In vain he racked his brain, he could not divine the Guises' scheme; but Queen Mary betrayed it.

'It would have been a pity,' said she, laughing, 'to see so clever a head fall; you must allow that my uncle is magnanimous.'

'Yes, Madam, for my head fits no shoulders but my own, although one is larger than the other.—But is it magnanimity in your uncle? Has he not rather gained credit at a cheap rate? Do you think it such an easy matter to have the law of a Prince of the Blood?'

'We have not done yet,' replied she. 'We shall see how you behave at the execution of the gentlemen, your friends, over which the Council have determined to make the greatest display.'

'I shall do as the King does,' said Condé.

'The King, the Queen-mother, and I shall all be present, with all the Court and the Ambassadors——'

'Quite a high day?' said the Prince ironically.

'Better than that,' said the young Queen, 'an *auto-da-fé*, a function of high political purport. The gentlemen of France must be subjugated by the Crown; they must be cured of their taste for faction and manœuvring——'

'You will not cure them of their warlike temper by showing them their danger, Madam, and at this game you risk the Crown itself,' replied the Prince.

At the end of this dinner, which was gloomy enough, Queen Mary was so unfortunately daring as to turn the conversation publicly on the trial which the nobles, taken under arms, were at that moment undergoing, and to speak of the necessity for giving the utmost solemnity to their execution.

'But, Madam,' said Francis II., 'is it not enough for the King of France to know that the blood of so many brave gentlemen must be shed? Must it be a cause of triumph?'

'No, Sir, but an example,' replied Catherine.

'Your grandfather and your father were in the habit of seeing heretics burned,' said Mary Stewart.

'The kings who reigned before me went their way,' said Francis, 'and I mean to go mine.'

'Philip II.,' Catherine went on, 'who is a great king lately, when he was in the Netherlands, had an *auto-da-fè* postponed till he should have returned to Valladolid.'

'What do you think about it, cousin?' said the King to the Prince de Condé.

'Sir, you cannot avoid going; the Papal Nuncio and the Ambassadors must be present. For my part, I am delighted to go if the ladies are to be of the party.'

The Prince, at a glance from Catherine de' Medici, had boldly taken his line.

While the Prince de Condé was being admitted to the château of Amboise, the furrier to the two Queens was also arriving from Paris, brought thither by the uneasiness produced by the reports of the Rebellion, not only in himself and his family, but also in the Lalliers.

At the gate of the château, when the old man craved admission, the captain of the Guard, at the words 'Queen's furrier,' answered at once—

'My good man, if you want to be hanged, you have only to set foot in the courtyard.'

On hearing this, the unhappy father sat down on a rail a little way off, to wait till some attendant on either of the Queens, or some woman of the Court, should pass him, to ask for some news of his son; but he remained there the whole day without seeing anybody he knew, and was at last obliged to go down into the town, where he found a lodging, not without difficulty, in an inn on the Square where the executions were to take place. He was obliged to pay a livre a day to secure a room looking out on the Square.

On the following day, he was brave enough to look on from his window at the rebels who had been condemned to the wheel, or to be hanged, as men of minor importance; and the Syndic of the Furriers' Guild was glad enough not to find his son among the sufferers.

When it was all over, he went to place himself in the clerk's way. Having mentioned his name, and pressed a purse full of crown-pieces into the man's hand, he begged him to see whether, in the three former days of execution, the name of Christophe Lecamus had occurred. The registrar, touched by the despairing old father's manners and tone of voice, conducted him to his own house. After carefully comparing notes, he could assure the old man that the said Christophe was not among those who had hitherto been executed, nor was he named among those who were to die within the next few days.

'My dear master,' said the clerk to the furrier, 'the Parlement is now engaged in trying the lords and gentlemen concerned in the business, and the principal leaders. So, possibly, your son is imprisoned in the château, and will be one in the magnificent execution for which my Lords the Duc de Guise and the Cardinal de Lorraine are making great preparations. Twenty-seven barons are to be beheaded, with eleven counts and seven marquises, fifty gentlemen in all, and leaders of the Reformers. As the administration of justice in Touraine has no connection with that of the Paris Parlement, if you positively must have some news of your son, go to my Lord the Chancellor Olivier, who, by the orders of the Lieutenant-General of the kingdom, has the management of the proceedings.'

Three times did the poor old man go to the Chancellor's house and stand in a file of people in the courtyard, in common with an immense number of people who had come to pray for their relations' lives; but as titled folks were admitted before the middle class, he was obliged to give up all hope of speaking with the Chancellor, though he saw him several times coming out of his house to go either to the château or to the Commission appointed by the Parlement, along a way cleared for him by soldiers, between two hedges of petitioners who were thrust aside.

It was a dreadful scene of misery, for among this crowd were wives, daughters, and mothers, whole families in tears. Old Lecamus gave a great deal of gold to the servants at the château, enjoining on them that they should deliver certain letters he wrote to la Dayelle, Queen Mary's waiting-woman, or to the Queen-mother's woman ; but the lackeys took the good man's money, and then, by the Cardinal's orders, handed all letters to the Provost of the Law Court. As a consequence of their unprecedented cruelty, the Princes of Lorraine had cause to fear revenge ; and they never took greater precautions than during the stay of the Court at Amboise, so that neither the most effectual bribery, that of gold, nor the most diligent inquiries brought the furrier any light as to his son's fate. He wandered about the little town in a melancholy way, watching the tremendous preparations that the Cardinal was making for the shocking spectacle at which the Prince de Condé was to be present.

Public curiosity was being stimulated, by every means in use at the time, from Paris to Nantes. The execution had been announced from the pulpit by every preacher, in a breath with the King's victory over the heretics.

Three elegant stands, the centre one apparently to be the finest of the three, were being erected against the curtain-wall of the château, at the foot of which the execution was to take place. All round the open space raised wooden seats were being put up, after the fashion of an amphitheatre, to accommodate the enormous crowd attracted by the notoriety of this *auto-da-fè*. About ten thousand persons were camping out in the fields on the day before this hideous spectacle. The roofs were crowded with spectators, and windows were let for as much as ten livres, an enormous sum at that time.

The unhappy father had, as may be supposed, secured one of the best places for commanding a view of the Square where so many men of family were to perish, on

a huge scaffold erected in the middle, and covered with black cloth. On the morning of the fatal day, the headsman's block, on which the victim laid his head, kneeling in front of it, was placed on the scaffold, and an armchair, hung with black, for the Recorder of the Court, whose duty it was to call the condemned by name and read their sentence. The enclosure was guarded from early morning by the Scotch soldiers and the men-at-arms of the King's household, to keep the crowd out till the hour of the executions.

After a solemn Mass in the chapel of the château and in every church in the town, the gentlemen were led forth, the last survivors of all the conspirators. These men, some of whom had been through the torture chamber, were collected round the foot of the scaffold, and exhorted by monks, who strove to persuade them to renounce the doctrines of Calvin. But not one would listen to these preachers, turned on to them by the Cardinal de Lorraine, among whom, no doubt, these gentlemen feared that there might be some spies on behalf of the Guises.

To escape being persecuted with these exhortations, they began to sing a psalm turned into French verse by Clément Marot. Calvin, as is well known, had decreed that God should be worshipped in the mother-tongue of every country, from motives of common sense as well as from antagonism to the Roman Church. It was a pathetic moment for all those among the throng, who felt for these gentlemen, when they heard this verse sung at the moment when the Court appeared on the scene—

> 'Lord, help us in our need!
> Lord, bless us with Thy grace!
> And on the saints in sore distress
> Let shine Thy glorious face!'

The eyes of the Reformers all centred on the Prince de Condé, who was intentionally placed between Queen

Mary and the Duc d'Orléans. Queen Catherine de' Medici sat next her son, with the Cardinal on her left. The Papal Nuncio stood behind the two Queens. The Lieutenant-General of the kingdom was on horseback, below the Royal stand, with two marshals of France and his captains. As soon as the Prince de Condé appeared, all the gentlemen sentenced to death, to whom he was known, bowed to him, and the brave hunchback returned the salutation.

'It is hard,' said he to the Duc d'Orléans, 'not to be civil to men who are about to die.'

The two other grand stands were filled by invited guests, by courtiers, and the attendants on their Majesties; in short, the rank and fashion of the château from Blois, who thus rushed from festivities to executions, just as they afterwards rushed from the pleasures of Court life to the perils of war, with a readiness which to foreigners will always be one of the mainsprings of their policy in France. The poor Syndic of the Furriers' Guild felt the keenest joy at failing to discern his son among the fifty-seven gentlemen condemned to death.

At a signal from the Duc de Guise, the clerk, from the top of the scaffold, called out at once, in a loud voice—

'Jean-Louis-Albéric, Baron de Raunay, guilty of heresy, of the crime of high treason, and of bearing arms against the King's Majesty.'

A tall, handsome man mounted the scaffold with a firm step, bowed to the people and to the Court, and said—

'The indictment is false; I bore arms to deliver the King from his enemies of Lorraine!'

He laid his head on the block, and it fell.

The Reformers sang—

'Thou, Lord, hast proved our faith
And searched our soul's desire,
And purified our froward hearts,
As silver proved by fire.'

'Robert-Jean-René Briquemaut, Comte de Villemongis, guilty of high treason and rebellion against the King,' cried the Recorder.

The Count dipped his hands in the Baron de Raunay's blood, and said—

'May this blood be on the head of those who are truly guilty!'

The Reformers sang on—

'Thou, Lord, hast led our feet
Where foes had laid their snare;
To Thee, O Lord, the glory be,
Though we should perish there.'

'Confess, my lord Nuncio,' said the Prince de Condé, 'that if French gentlemen know how to plot, they also know how to die.'

'What hatred you are entailing on the heads of your children, brother,' said the Duchesse de Guise to the Cardinal de Lorraine.

'The sight makes me feel sick,' said the young King, who had turned pale at the sight of all this bloodshed.

'Pooh! Rebels!' said Catherine de' Medici.

Still the hymn went on, still the axe was plied. At last the sublime spectacle of men who could die singing, and, above all, the impression produced on the crowd by the gradual dwindling of the voices, became stronger than the terror inspired by the Guises.

'Mercy!' cried the mob, when they heard at last only the feeble chant of a single victim, reserved till the last, as being the most important.

He was standing alone at the foot of the steps leading up to the scaffold, and sang—

'Lord, help us in our need!
Lord, bless us with Thy grace!
And on the saints in sore distress
Let shine Thy glorious face!'

'Come, Duc de Nemours,' said the Prince de Condé,

who was tired of his position; 'you, to whom the securing of the victory is due, and who helped to entrap all these people,—do not you feel that you ought to ask the life of this one? It is Castelnau, who, as I was told, had your promise for courteous treatment when he surrendered——'

'Did I wait to see him here before trying to save him?' said the Duc de Nemours, stung by this bitter reproof.

The clerk spoke slowly, intentionally, no doubt—

'Michel-Jean-Louis, Baron de Castelnau-Chalosse, accused and convicted of the crime of high treason, and of fighting against his Majesty the King.'

'No,' retorted Castelnau haughtily; 'it can be no crime to oppose the tyranny and intended usurpation of the Guises!'

The headsman, who was tired, seeing some stir in the royal seats, rested on his axe.

'Monsieur le Baron,' said he, 'I should be glad not to hurt you. One minute may perhaps save you.'

And all the people shouted again for mercy.

'Come,' said the King, 'a pardon for poor Castelnau, who saved the Duc d'Orléans.'

The Cardinal intentionally misinterpreted the word 'Come.' He nodded to the executioner, and Castelnau's head fell at the moment when the King pronounced his pardon.

'That one goes to your account, Cardinal,' said Catherine.

On the day after this horrible massacre, the Prince de Condé set out for Navarre.

This affair made a great sensation throughout France and in every foreign Court. The torrents of noble blood then shed caused the Chancellor Olivier such deep grief, that this admirable judge, seeing the end at which the Guises were aiming, felt that he was not strong enough to hold his own against them. Although

they had made him what he was, he would not sacrifice his duty and the Monarchy to them; he retired from public life, suggesting that l'Hôpital should be his successor. Catherine, on hearing of Olivier's choice, proposed Birague for the post of Chancellor, and urged her request with great pertinacity. The Cardinal, who knew nothing of the note written to Catherine by l'Hôpital, and who believed him still faithful to the House of Lorraine, upheld him as Birague's rival, and the Queen-mother affected to be over-ridden.

L'Hôpital was no sooner appointed than he took steps to prevent the introduction into France of the Holy Office, which the Cardinal de Lorraine wished to establish; and he so effectually opposed the Anti-Gallican measures and policy of the Guises, and showed himself so sturdy a Frenchman, that within three months of his appointment he was exiled, to reduce his spirit, to his estate of le Vignay, near Etampes.

Old Lecamus impatiently waited till the Court should leave Amboise, for he could find no opportunity of speaking to either Queen Mary or Queen Catherine; but he hoped to be able to place himself in their way at the time when the Court should be moving along the river-bank on the way back to Blois. The furrier dressed himself as a poor man, at the risk of being seized as a spy, and favoured by this disguise, he mingled with the beggars who stood by the wayside.

After the departure of the Prince de Condé, the Duke and the Cardinal thought that they had silenced the Reformed party, and they left the Queen-mother a little more liberty. Lecamus knew that Catherine, instead of travelling in a litter, liked to ride on horseback on a *planchette*, as it was called, a side saddle with a foot-rest. This sort of stirrup was invented by or for Catherine, who, having hurt her leg, rested both feet on a velvet sling, sitting sideways, and supporting one knee in a hollow cut in the saddle. As the Queen had very fine

legs, she was accused of having hit on this device for displaying them.

Thus the old man was able to place himself in sight of the Queen-mother; but when she saw him, she affected anger.

'Go away from hence, good man, and let no one see you speaking to me,' she said with some anxiety. 'Get yourself appointed delegate to the States-General from the corporation of Paris Guilds, and be on my side in the Assembly at Orleans, you will then hear something definite about your son——'

'Is he alive?' said the old man.

'Alas!' said the Queen, 'I hope it.'

And Lecamus was obliged to return home with this sad reply, and the secret as to the convocation of the States-General, which the Queen had told him.

Some days before this, the Cardinal de Lorraine had received information as to the guilt of the Court of Navarre. At Lyons, and at Mouvans in Dauphiné, the Reformers, commanded by the most enterprising of the Bourbon princes, had tried to inflame the population. This daring attempt, after the dreadful executions at Amboise, astonished the Guises, who, to put an end to heresy, no doubt, by some means of which they kept the secret, proposed to assemble the States-General at Orleans. Catherine de' Medici, who saw a support for her own policy in the representations of the nation, consented with joy. The Cardinal, who aimed at recapturing his prey, and overthrowing the House of Bourbon, convoked the States solely to secure the presence of the Prince de Condé and of the King of Navarre, Antoine de Bourbon, father of Henri IV. He then meant to make use of Christophe to convict the Prince of high treason if he were able once more to get him into the King's power.

After spending two months in the prison of Blois,

Christophe one morning was carried out on a litter lying on a mattress, was embarked on a barge, and taken up the river to Orleans before a westerly breeze. He reached that town the same evening, and was taken to the famous tower of Saint-Aignan. Christophe, who knew not what to make of his transfer, had time enough for meditation on his behaviour and on his future prospects. There he remained two months more, on his bed, unable to use his legs. His bones were crushed. When he begged to be allowed the help of a surgeon, the gaoler told him that his orders with regard to his prisoner were so strict that he dared not allow any one else even to bring him his food. This severity, of which the effect was absolutely solitary confinement, surprised Christophe. His idea was that he must be either hanged or released; he knew nothing whatever of the events happening at Amboise.

In spite of the secret warnings to remain at home sent to them by Catherine de' Medici, the two chiefs of the House of Bourbon determined to appear at the meeting of the States-General, since autograph letters from the King were reassuring; and when the Court was settling at Orleans, Groslot, the Chancellor of Navarre, announced their advent, to the surprise of all.

Francis II. took up his quarters in the house of the Chancellor of Navarre, who was also the Bailli or Recorder of Orleans. This man Groslot, whose double appointment is one of the odd features of a time when Reformers were in possession of abbeys—Groslot, the Jacques Cœur of Orleans, one of the richest citizens of his day, did not leave his name to his house. It came to be known as the *Bailliage*, having been purchased, no doubt, from his heirs, by the Crown, or by the provincial authorities, to be the seat of that tribunal. This elegant structure, built by the citizens of the sixteenth century, adds a detail to the history of a time when the

King, the nobility, and the middle class vied with each other in wealth, elegance, and splendour; especially in their dwellings—as may be seen at Varangeville, Ango's magnificent manor-house, and the Hôtel d'Hercules, as it is called, in Paris, which still exists, but in a condition that is the despair of archæologists and of lovers of mediæval art.

Those who have been to Orleans can hardly have failed to observe the Hôtel de Ville in the Place de l'Estape. This townhall is the Old Bailli's Court, the Hôtel Groslot, the most illustrious and most neglected house in Orleans.

The remains of this hotel plainly show to the archæologist's eye how magnificent it must once have been, at a time when citizens built their houses more of wood than of stone, and the upper ranks alone had the right to build manor-houses, a word of special meaning. Since it served as the King's residence at a time when the Court made so much display of pomp and luxury, the Hôtel Groslot must then have been the largest and finest house in Orleans.

It was on the Place de l'Estape that the Guises and the King held a review of the municipal guard, to which Monsieur de Cypierre was nominated captain during the King's visit. At that time, the Cathedral of Sainte-Croix—afterwards finished by Henri IV., who desired to set the seal to his conversion—was being built, and the surrounding ground, strewn with blocks of stone and encumbered with piles of timber, was held by the Guises, who lodged in the Bishop's palace, now destroyed.

The town was in military occupation, and the measures adopted by the Guises plainly showed how little liberty they intended to give to the States-General, while the delegates flocked into the town and raised the rents of the most wretched lodgings. The Court, the municipal militia, the nobles, and the citizens all alike

expected some *Coup d'État;* and their expectations were fulfilled when the Princes of the Blood arrived.

As soon as the two Princes entered the King's room, the Court saw with dismay how insolent was the behaviour of the Cardinal de Lorraine, who, to assert his audacious pretensions, kept his head covered, while the King of Navarre before him was bareheaded. Catherine de' Medici stood with downcast eyes, not to betray her indignation. A solemn explanation then took place between the young King and the two heads of the younger branch. It was brief, for at the first words spoken by the Prince de Condé, Francis II. closed the discussion by saying—

'My lords and cousins, I fancied the incident of Amboise was at an end; it is not so, and we shall see cause to regret our indulgence!'

'It is not the King who speaks thus,' said the Prince de Condé, 'but Messieurs de Guise.'

'Good-day, Monsieur,' said the little King, crimson with rage.

As he went through the great hall, the Prince was stopped by the two captains of the Guards. When the officer of the French Guard stepped forward, the Prince took a letter out of the breast of his doublet and said, in the presence of all the Court—

'Can you read me this, Monsieur de Maillé-Brézé?'

'With pleasure,' said the French captain:—

'"Cousin, come in all security; I give you my royal word that you may. If you need a safe conduct, these presents will serve you."'

'And signed——?' said the bold and mischievous hunchback.

'Signed "François,"' said Maillé.

'Nay, nay,' replied the Prince, 'it is signed "Your good cousin and friend, François!"—Gentlemen,' he went on, turning to the Scotch Guard, 'I will follow

you to the prison whither you are to escort me by the King's orders. There is enough noble spirit in this room to understand that.'

The utter silence that reigned in the room might have enlightened the Guises, but silence is the last thing that princes listen to.

'Monseigneur,' said the Cardinal de Tournon, who was following the Prince, 'since the day at Amboise you have taken steps in opposition to royal authority at Lyons and at Mouvans in Dauphiné—things of which the King knew nothing when he addressed you in those terms.'

'Rascals!' cried the Prince, laughing.

'You made a public declaration against the Mass, and in favour of heresy——'

'We are masters in Navarre,' said the Prince.

'In Béarn, you mean! But you owe homage to the Crown,' replied the Président de Thou.

'Ah, you are here, Président!' exclaimed the Prince ironically. 'And is all the Parlement with you?'

With these words, the Prince flashed a look of contempt at the Cardinal and left the room; he understood that his head was in peril.

On the following day, when Messieurs de Thou, de Viole, d'Espesse, Bourdin the public prosecutor, and du Tillet, the chief clerk, came into his prison, he kept them standing, and expressed his regrets at seeing them engaged on a business which did not concern them; then he said to the clerk—

'Write.'

And he dictated as follows:—

'I, Louis de Bourbon, Prince de Condé, peer of the realm, Marquis de Conti, Comte de Soissons, Prince of the Blood of France, formally refuse to recognise any Commission appointed to try me, inasmuch as that by virtue of my rank and the privileges attaching to every member of the Royal Family, I can only be attainted,

heard, and judged by a Parlement of all the peers in their places, the Chambers in full assembly, and the King seated on the bed of justice.—You ought to know this better than any one, gentlemen, and this is all you will get of me. For the rest, I trust in God and my Right.'

The magistrates proceeded nevertheless, in spite of the determined silence of the Prince.

The King of Navarre was at liberty, but closely watched; his prison was a wider one than the Prince's, and that was the whole difference between his position and his brother's; for the heads of the King and the Prince were to be felled at the same time.

So Christophe was so closely confined by order of the Cardinal and the Lieutenant-General of the kingdom only to afford proof to the judges of the Prince's guilt. The letters found on the person of La Sagne, the Prince's secretary, intelligible to a statesman, were not clear enough for the judges. The Cardinal had thought of bringing the Prince accidentally face to face with Christophe, who had been placed, not without a purpose, in a lower room of the tower of Saint-Aignan, and the window looked out on the yard. Each time he was examined by the magistrates, Christophe entrenched himself in systematic denial, which naturally prolonged the affair till the meeting of the States-General.

Lecamus, who had made a point of getting himself elected by the citizens of Paris as a deputy for the 'Third Estate,' came to Orleans a few days after the Prince's arrest. This event, of which he had news at Etampes, increased his alarms, for he understood—he who alone in the world knew of his son's interview with the Prince under the Pont-au-Change—that Christophe's fate was bound up with that of the rashly daring head of the Reformation party. So he determined to study the mysterious interests which had become so entangled at Court since the States had met, so as to hit upon some plan for rescuing his son. It was vain to think of having recourse

to Queen Catherine, who refused to receive the furrier. No one of the Court to whom he had access could give him any satisfactory information with regard to Christophe, and he had sunk to such depths of despair that he was about to address himself to the Cardinal, when he heard that Monsieur de Thou had accepted the office of one of the judges of the Prince de Condé—a blot on the good fame of that great jurist. The Syndic went to call on his son's patron, and learned that Christophe was alive but a prisoner.

Tourillon, the glover, to whose house la Renaudie had sent Christophe, had offered a room to the Sieur Lecamus for the whole time during which the States-General should be sitting. He believed the furrier to be, like himself, secretly attached to the Reformed religion; but he soon perceived that a father who fears for his son's life thinks no more of shades of religious dogma; he throws himself soul and body on the mercy of God, never thinking of the badge he wears before men.

The old man, repulsed at every attempt, wandered half-witless about the streets. Against all his expectations, his gold was of no avail; Monsieur de Thou had warned him that even if he should bribe some servant of the Guise household, he would only be so much out of pocket, for the Duke and the Cardinal allowed nothing to be known concerning Christophe. This judge, whose fair fame is somewhat tarnished by the part he played at this juncture, had tried to give the unhappy father some hope; but he himself trembled for his godson's life, and his consolations only added to the furrier's alarm. The old man was always prowling round the house; in three months he grew quite thin.

His only hope now lay in the warm friendship which had so long bound him to the Hippocrates of the sixteenth century. Ambroise Paré tried to say a word to Queen Mary as he came out of the King's room; but the instant he mentioned Christophe, the daughter of the

Stewarts, annoyed by the prospect before her in the event of any ill befalling the King, whom she believed to have been poisoned by the Reformers, as he had been taken suddenly ill, replied—

'If my uncles would take my opinion, such a fanatic would have been hanged before now.'

On the evening when this ominous reply had been repeated to Lecamus by his friend Paré, on the Place de l'Estape, he went home half dead, and retired to his room, refusing to eat any supper.

Tourillon, very uneasy, went upstairs, and found the old man in tears; and as the poor furrier's feeble eyes showed the reddened and wrinkled linings of the lids, the glover believed that they were tears of blood.

'Be comforted, father,' said the Huguenot, 'the citizens of Orleans are enraged at seeing their town treated as if it had been taken by assault, and guarded by Monsieur de Cypierre's soldiery. If the Prince de Condé's life should be in danger, we should very soon demolish the tower of Saint-Aignan, for the whole town is on the Reformers' side, and would rise in rebellion, you may be quite certain.'

'But even if the Guises were seized, would their death give me back my son?' said the unhappy father.

At this instant there was a timid rap at the outer door; Tourillon went down to open it. It was quite dark. In these troubled times the master of every household took elaborate precautions. Tourillon looked out through the bars of a wicket in the door, and saw a stranger, whose accent betrayed him as an Italian. This man, dressed in black, asked to see Lecamus on matters of business, and Tourillon showed him in. At the sight of the stranger the old furrier quaked visibly, but the visitor had time to lay a finger on his lips. Lecamus, understanding the gesture, immediately said—

'You have come to offer furs for sale, I suppose?'

'*Si*,' replied the stranger in Italian, with an air of privity.

This man was, in fact, the famous Ruggieri, the Queen-mother's astrologer. Tourillon went downstairs, perceiving that he was not wanted.

'Where can we talk without fear of being overheard?' said the astute Florentine.

'Only in the open fields,' replied Lecamus. 'But we shall not be allowed out of the town; you know how strictly the gates are guarded. No one can pass out without an order from Monsieur de Cypierre, not even a member of the Assembly like myself. Indeed, at to-morrow's sitting we all intend to complain of this restriction on our liberty.'

'Work like a mole, never let your paws be seen in any kind of business,' replied the wily Florentine. 'To-morrow will no doubt be a decisive day. From my calculations, to-morrow, or soon after, you will perhaps see your son.'

'God grant it! Though you are said to deal only with the Devil!'

'Come and see me at home,' said the astrologer, smiling. 'I watch the stars from the tower belonging to the Sieur Touchet du Beauvais, the Lieutenant of the Bailiwick, whose daughter has found favour in the eyes of the little Duc d'Orléans. I have cast the girl's horoscope, and it does in fact portend that she will become a great lady and be loved by a King. The Lieutenant is a clever fellow, he is interested in science, and the Queen found me lodgings with the good man, who is cunning enough to be a rabid Guisard till Charles IX. comes to the throne.'

The furrier and the astrologer made their way to the Sieur de Beauvais' house without being seen or interfered with; and in the event of Lecamus being discovered, Ruggieri meant to afford him a pretext in his desire to consult the astrologer as to his son's fate.

When they had climbed to the top of the turret where the astrologer had established himself, Lecamus said—

'Then my son is really alive?'

'At present,' said the Italian. 'But we must make haste to save him. Remember, O seller of skins, that I would not give two farthings for yours if in the whole course of your life you breathe one word of what I am about to tell you.'

'The warning is not needed, master. I have been furrier to the Court since the time of the late King Louis XII., and this is the fourth reign I have lived under.'

'And you may soon say the fifth,' replied Ruggieri.

'What do you know of my son?'

'Well, he has been through the torture-chamber.'

'Poor boy!' sighed the old man, looking up to heaven.

'His knees and ankles are a little damaged, but he has gained royal protection, which will be over him as long as he lives,' the Florentine added, on seeing the father's horror. 'Your little Christophe has done good service to our great Queen Catherine. If we can get your son out of the clutches of the Cardinal, you will see him Councillor in the Parlement yet. And a man would let his bones be broken three times over to find himself in the good graces of that beloved sovereign—a real genius she, who will triumph over every obstacle.

'I have cast the horoscope of the Duc de Guise: he will be killed within a year. Come now, Christophe did meet the Prince de Condé——'

'You know the future, do not you know the past?' the furrier put in.

'I am not questioning you, I am informing you, good man. Well, your son will be placed to-morrow where the Prince will pass by. If he recognises him, or if the Prince recognises your son, Monsieur de Condé forfeits his head. As to what would become of his accomplice—God

only knows! But be easy. Neither your son nor the Prince is doomed to die; I have read their destiny; they will live. But by what means they may escape I know not. Now we will do what we can, apart from the certainty of my calculations. Monsieur de Condé shall get a prayer-book to-morrow, delivered to him by a safe hand, in which he shall find a warning. God grant that your son may be secretive, for he can have no warning! And a mere flash of recognition would cost the Prince his life. Thus, although the Queen-mother has every reason to depend on Christophe's fidelity——'

'He has been put to cruel tests,' cried the furrier.

'Do not speak in that way. Do you suppose that the Queen is dancing for joy? She is indeed going to take her measures exactly as though the Guises had decided on the Prince's death; and she is wise, that shrewd and prudent Queen! Now she counts on you to help her in every way. You have some influence in the "Third Estate," where you are the representative of the Guilds of Paris; and even if the Guisards should promise to set your son at liberty, try to deceive them and stir up your class against the Princes of Lorraine. Vote for the Queen-mother as Regent; the King of Navarre will give his assent to that publicly, to-morrow, in the Assembly.'

'But the King?'

'The King will die,' said Ruggieri; 'I have read it in the stars. What the Queen requires of you in the Assembly is very simple; but she needs a greater service from you than that. You maintained the great Ambroise Paré while he was a student; you are his friend——'

'Ambroise loves the Duc de Guise in these days better than he loves me,' said the furrier. 'And he is right; he owes his place to him. Still, he is faithful to the King. And, although he has a leaning towards the Reformation, he will do nothing but his duty.'

'A plague on all honest men!' cried the Florentine. 'Ambroise boasted this evening that he could pull the

little King through. If the King recovers his health, the Guises must triumph, the Princes are dead men, the House of Bourbon is extinct, we go back to Florence, your son is hanged, and the Guises will make short work of the rest of the Royal family——'

'Great God!' cried Lecamus.

'Do not exclaim in that way; it is like a citizen who knows nothing of Court manners; but go forthwith to Ambroise, and find out what he means to do to save the King. If it seems at all certain, come and tell me what the operation is in which he has such faith.'

'But——' Lecamus began.

'Obey me blindly, my good friend, otherwise you will be dazzled.'

'He is right,' thought the furrier.

And he went off to the King's surgeon, who lived in an inn in the Place du Martroi.

At this juncture Catherine de' Medici found herself, politically speaking, in the same extremities as she had been in when Christophe had seen her at Blois. Though she had inured herself to the struggle, and had exerted her fine intellect in that first defeat, her situation, though precisely the same now as then, was even more critical and dangerous than at the time of the riots at Amboise. Events had grown in magnitude, and the Queen had grown with them. Though she seemed to proceed in agreement with the Princes of Lorraine, Catherine held the threads of a conspiracy skilfully plotted against her terrible associates, and was only waiting for a favourable moment to drop her mask.

The Cardinal had just found himself deceived by Catherine. The crafty Italian had seen in the younger branch of the Royal family an obstacle she could use to check the pretensions of the Guises; and, in spite of the counsel of the two Gondis, who advised her to leave the Guises to act with what violence they could against the

Bourbons, she had, by warning the Queen of Navarre, brought to nought the plot to seize Béarn concerted by the Guises with the King of Spain. As this State secret was known only to themselves and to Catherine, the Princes of Lorraine were assured of her betrayal, and they wished to send her back to Florence; but to secure proofs of Catherine's treachery to the State—the House of Lorraine was the State—the Duke and Cardinal had just made her privy to their scheme for making away with the King of Navarre.

The precautions which were immediately taken by Antoine de Bourbon proved to the brothers that this secret, known but to three people, had been divulged by the Queen-mother. The Cardinal de Lorraine accused Catherine of her breach of faith in the presence of the King, threatening her with banishment if any fresh indiscretions on her part should imperil the State. Catherine, seeing herself in imminent danger, was compelled to act as a high-handed sovereign. She gave ample proof indeed of her fine abilities, but it must also be confessed that she was well served by the friends she trusted.

L'Hôpital sent her a letter in these terms:—

'Do not allow a Prince of the Blood to be killed by a committee, or you will soon be carried off yourself.'

Catherine sent Birague to le Vignay, desiring the Chancellor to come to the Assembly of the States-General, although he was in banishment. Birague returned the same evening with l'Hôpital, halting within three leagues of Orleans, and the Chancellor thus declared himself on the side of the Queen-mother.

Chiverni, whose fidelity was with good reason regarded as doubtful by the Guises, had fled from Orleans, and by a forced march, which nearly was his death, he reached Écouen in ten hours. He there told the Connétable de Montmorency of the danger his nephew the Prince de Condé was in, and of the encroachments of the Guises.

Anne de Montmorency, furious at learning that the Prince owed his life merely to the sudden illness of which Francis II. was dying, marched up with fifteen hundred horse and a hundred gentlemen under arms. The more effectually to surprise the Guises, he had avoided Paris, coming from Écouen to Corbeil, and from Corbeil to Pithiviers by the Valley of the Essonne.

'Man to man, and both to pull, leaves each but little wool!' he said, on the occasion of this dashing advance.

Anne de Montmorency, who had been the preserver of France when Charles V. invaded Provence, and the Duc de Guise, who had checked the Emperor's second attempt at Metz, were, in fact, the two greatest French warriors of their time.

Catherine had waited for the right moment to stir up the hatred of the man whom the Guises had overthrown. The Marquis de Simeuse, in command of the town of Gien, on hearing of the advance of so considerable a force as the Connétable brought with him, sprang to horse, hoping to warn the Duke in time. The Queen-mother, meanwhile, certain that the Connétable would come to his nephew's rescue, and confident of the Chancellor's devotion to the royal cause, had fanned the hopes and encouraged the spirit of the Reformed party. The Colignys and the adherents of the imperilled House of Bourbon had made common cause with the Queen-mother's partisans; a coalition between various antagonistic interests, attacked by a common foe, was silently formed in the Assembly of the States, where the question was boldly broached of making Catherine Regent of France in the event of the young King's death. Catherine herself, whose faith in astrology was far greater than her belief in Church dogmas, had ventured to extremes against her foes when she saw her son dying at the end of the time fixed as his term of life by the famous soothsayer brought to the château de Chaumont by Nostradamus.

A few days before the terrible close of his reign, Francis II. had chosen to go out on the Loire, so as not to be in the town at the hour of the Prince de Condé's intended execution. Having surrendered the Prince's head to the Cardinal de Lorraine, he feared a riot quite as much as he dreaded the supplications of the Princesse de Condé. As he was embarking, a fresh breeze, such as often sweeps the Loire at the approach of winter, gave him so violent an earache that he was forced to return home; he went to bed, never to leave it alive.

In spite of the disagreement of the physicians, who, all but Chapelain, were his enemies and opponents, Ambroise Paré maintained that an abscess had formed in the head, and that if no outlet were pierced the chances of the King's death were greater every day.

In spite of the late hour and the rigorous enforcement of the curfew at that time in Orleans, which was ruled as in a state of siege, Paré's lamp was shining in his window where he was studying. Lecamus called to him from below; and when he had announced his name, the surgeon gave orders that his old friend should be admitted.

'You give yourself no rest, Ambroise, and while saving the lives of others you will wear out your own,' said the furrier as he went in.

Indeed, there sat the surgeon, his books open, his instruments lying about, and before him a skull not long since buried, dug up from the grave, and perforated.

'I must save the King.'

'Then you are very sure you can, Ambroise?' said the old man, shuddering.

'As sure as I am alive. The King, my good old friend, has some evil humour festering on his brain, which will fill it up, and the danger is pressing; but by piercing the skull I let the matter out and free his head. I have already performed this operation three times; it was invented by a Piedmontese, and I have been so lucky

as to improve upon it. The first time it was at the siege of Metz, on Monsieur de Pienne, whom I got out of the scrape, and who has only been all the wiser for it; the second time it saved the life of a poor man on whom I wished to test the certainty of this daring operation to which Monsieur de Pienne had submitted; the third time was on a gentleman in Paris, who is now perfectly well. Trepanning—for that is the name given to it—is as yet little known. The sufferers object to it on the score of the imperfection of the instrument, but that I have been able to improve. So now I am experimenting on this head, to be sure of not failing to-morrow on the King's.'

'You must be very sure of yourself, for your head will be in danger if you——'

'I will wager my life that he is cured,' replied Paré, with the confidence of genius. 'Oh, my good friend, what is it to make a hole in a skull with due care? It is what soldiers do every day with no care at all.'

'But do you know, my boy,' said the citizen, greatly daring, 'that if you save the King, you ruin France? Do you know that your instrument will place the crown of the Valois on the head of a Prince of Lorraine, calling himself the direct heir of Charlemagne? Do you know that surgery and politics are, at this moment, at daggers drawn? Yes, the triumph of your genius will be the overthrow of your religion. If the Guises retain the Regency, the blood of the Reformers will flow in streams! Be a great citizen rather than a great surgeon, and sleep through to-morrow morning, leaving the King's room free to those leeches who, if they do not save the King, will save France.'

'I!' cried Paré. 'I—leave a man to die when I can cure him? Never! If I am to be hanged for a Calvinist, I will go to the château, all the same, right early to-morrow. Do not you know that the only favour I mean to ask, when I have saved the King, is your Christophe's

life? There will surely be a moment when Queen Mary can refuse me nothing.'

'Alas, my friend, has not the little King already refused the Princesse de Condé any pardon for her husband? Do not kill your religion by enabling the man to live who ought to die.'

'Are you going to puzzle yourself by trying to find out how God means to dispose of things in the future?' said Paré. 'Honest folks have but one motto—"Do your duty, come what may."—I did this at the siege of Calais when I set my foot on the Grand Master; I risked being cut down by all his friends and attendants, and here I am, surgeon to the King; I am a Reformer, and yet I can call the Guises my friends.—I will save the King!' cried the surgeon, with the sacred enthusiasm of conviction that genius knows, 'and God will take care of France!'

There was a knock at the door, and a few minutes later one of Ambroise Paré's servants gave a note to Lecamus, who read aloud these ominous words:—

'A scaffold is being erected at the Convent of the Récollets for the beheading of the Prince de Condé to-morrow.'

Ambroise and Lecamus looked at each other, both overpowered with horror.

'I will go and make sure,' said the furrier.

Out on the square, Ruggieri took Lecamus by the arm, asking what was Paré's secret for saving the King; but the old man, fearing some treachery, insisted on going to see the scaffold. So the astrologer and the furrier went together to the Récollets, where, in fact, they found carpenters at work by torchlight.

'Hey day, my friend,' said Lecamus to one of them; 'what business is this?'

'We are preparing to hang some heretics, since the bleeding at Ambroise did not cure them,' said a young friar, who was superintending the workmen.

'Monseigneur the Cardinal does well,' said the prudent Ruggieri. 'But in my country we do even better.'

'What do you do?'

'We burn them, brother.'

Lecamus was obliged to lean on the astrologer; his legs refused to carry him, for he thought that his son might next day be swinging to one of those gibbets. The poor old man stood between two sciences—astrology and medicine; each promised to save his son, for whom the scaffold was visibly rising. In this confusion of mind he was as wax in the hands of the Florentine.

'Well, my most respectable vendor of *vair*, what have you to say to these pleasantries of Lorraine?' said Ruggieri.

'Woe the day! You know I would give my own skin to see my boy's safe and sound.'

'That is what I call talking like a skinner,' replied the Italian. 'But if you will explain to me the operation that Ambroise proposes to perform on the King, I will guarantee your son's life.'

'Truly?' cried the old furrier.

'What shall I swear by?' said Ruggieri.

On this the unhappy old man repeated his conversation with Paré to the Italian, who was off, leaving the disconsolate father in the road the instant he had heard the great surgeon's secret.

'Whom the devil does he mean mischief to?' cried Lecamus, as he saw Ruggieri running at his utmost speed towards the Place de l'Estape.

Lecamus knew nothing of the terrible scene which was going on by the King's bedside, and which had led to the order being given for the erection of the scaffold for the Prince, who had been sentenced in default, as it were, though his execution was postponed for the moment by the King's illness.

There was no one in the hall, on the stairs, or in the

courtyard of the Bailli's house but those on actual duty. The crowd of courtiers had resorted to the lodgings of the King of Navarre, who, by the law of the land, was Regent. The French nobles, terrified indeed by the insolence of the Guises, felt an impulse to close their ranks round the chief of the younger branch, seeing that the Queen-mother was subservient to the Guises, and not understanding her Italian policy. Antoine de Bourbon, faithful to his secret compact with Catherine, was not to renounce his claim to the regency in her favour till the States-General should have voted on the question.

This absolute desertion had struck the Grand Master when, on his return from a walk through the town—as a precautionary measure—he found no one about the King but the friends dependent on his fortunes. The room where Francis II.'s bed had been placed adjoins the great hall of the bailiff's residence, and was at that time lined with oak panelling. The ceiling, formed of narrow boards, skilfully adjusted and painted, showed an arabesque pattern in blue on a gold ground, and a piece of it, pulled down about fifty years ago, has been preserved by a collector of antiquities. This room, hung with tapestry, and the floor covered with a carpet, was so dark that the burning tapers scarcely gave it light. The enormous bedstead, with four columnar posts and silk curtains, looked like a tomb. On one side of the bed, by the King's pillow, were Queen Mary and the Cardinal de Lorraine; on the other sat Catherine in an armchair. The physician-in-ordinary, the famous Jean Chapelain, afterwards in attendance on Charles IX., was standing by the fireplace. Perfect silence reigned.

The young King, pale and slight, lost in the sheets, was hardly to be seen, with his small, puckered face on the pillow. The Duchesse de Guise, seated on a stool, was supporting Mary Stewart; and near Catherine, in a window recess, Madame de Fieschi was watching the

Queen-mother's looks and gestures, for she understood the perils of her position.

In the great hall, notwithstanding the late hour, Monsieur de Cypierre, the Duc d'Orléans' tutor, appointed to be governor of the town, occupied a chimney corner with the two Gondis. Cardinal de Tournon, who at this crisis had taken part with Queen Catherine, on finding himself treated as an inferior by the Cardinal de Lorraine, whose equal he undoubtedly was in the Church, was conversing in a low voice with the brothers Gondi. The Maréchal de Vieilleville and Monsieur de Saint-André, Keeper of the Seals, were discussing in whispers the imminent danger of the Guises.

The Duc de Guise crossed the hall, glancing hastily about him, and bowed to the Duc d'Orléans, whom he recognised.

'Monseigneur,' said he, 'this may give you a lesson in the knowledge of men. The Catholic nobility of the kingdom have crowded round a heretic prince, believing that the States assembled will place the Regency in the hands of the heir to the traitor who so long kept your illustrious grandfather a prisoner.'

And after this speech, which was calculated to make a deep impression on a prince's mind, he went into the bedroom where the young King was lying, not so much asleep as heavily drowsy. As a rule, the Duc de Guise had the art of overcoming, by his affable expression, the sinister appearance of his scarred features; but at this moment he could not force a smile, seeing the instrument of power quite broken. The Cardinal, whose civic courage was equal to his brother's military valour, came forward a step or two to meet the Lieutenant-General.

'Robertet believes that little Pinard has been bought over by the Queen-mother,' he said in his ear, as he led him back into the hall. 'He has been made use of to work on the members of the Assembly.'

'Bah! what matters our being betrayed by a secretary, when there is treason everywhere?' cried the Duke. 'The town is for the Reformers, and we are on the eve of a revolt. Yes! the *Guépins* are malcontents,' he added, giving the people of Orleans their common nickname, 'and if Paré cannot save the King, we shall see a desperate outbreak. Before long we shall have to lay siege to Orleans, which is a vermin's nest of Huguenots.'

'In the last minute,' said the Cardinal, 'I have been watching that Italian woman, who sits there without a spark of feeling. She is waiting for her son's death, God forgive her!—I wonder whether it would not be well to arrest her and the King of Navarre too.'

'It is more than enough to have the Prince de Condé in prison,' replied the Duke.

The sound of a horse ridden at top-speed came up from the gate. The two Princes went to the window, and by the light of the gatekeeper's torch and of the cresset that was always burning under the gateway, the Duke recognised in the rider's hat the famous cross of Lorraine, which the Cardinal had made the badge of their partisans. He sent one of the men-at-arms, who stood in the ante-room, to say that the new-comer was to be admitted; and he went to the head of the stairs to meet him, followed by his brother.

'What is the news, my dear Simeuse?' asked the Duke, with the charming manner he always had for a soldier, as he recognised the Commandant of Gien.

'The Connétable is entering Pithiviers; he left Écouen with fifteen hundred horse and a hundred gentlemen——'

'Have they any following?' said the Duke.

'Yes, Monseigneur,' replied Simeuse. 'There are two thousand six hundred of them in all. Some say that Thoré is behind with a troop of infantry. If Montmorency amuses himself with waiting for his son, you have time before you to undo him.'

'And that is all you know? Are his motives for this rush to arms commonly reported?'

'Anne speaks as little as he writes; do you go and meet him, brother, while I will greet him here with his nephew's head,' said the Cardinal, ordering an attendant to fetch Robertet.

'Vieilleville,' cried the Duke to the Marshal, who came in, 'the Connétable de Montmorency has dared to take up arms. If I go out to meet him, will you be responsible for keeping order in the town?'

'The instant you are out of it, the townsfolk will rise; and who can foresee the issue of a fray between horsemen and citizens in such narrow streets?' replied the Marshal.

'My Lord!' said Robertet, flying up the stairs, 'the Chancellor is at the gates, and insists on coming in; are we to admit him?'

'Yes, admit him,' said the Cardinal de Lorraine. 'The Constable and the Chancellor together would be too dangerous; we must keep them apart. We were finely tricked by the Queen-mother when we elected l'Hôpital to that office.'

Robertet nodded to a captain who awaited the reply at the foot of the stairs, and returned quickly to take the Cardinal's orders.

'My Lord,' said he, making a last effort, 'I take the liberty of representing to you that the sentence requires the approval of the King in Council. If you violate the law for a Prince of the Blood, it will not be respected in favour of a Cardinal or of a Duc de Guise.'

'Pinard has disturbed your mind, Robertet,' said the Cardinal sternly. 'Do you not know that the King signed the warrant on the day when he went out, leaving it to us to carry it out?'

'Though you are almost requiring my head of me when you give me this duty—which, however, will be that of the town-provost—I obey, my Lord.'

'The Grand Master heard the debate without wincing; but he took his brother by the arm, and led him to a corner of the hall.

'Of course,' said he, 'the direct heirs of Charlemagne have the right to take back the crown which was snatched from their family by Hugues Capet; but—can they? The pear is not ripe.—Our nephew is dying, and all the Court is gone over to the King of Navarre.'

'The King's heart failed him; but for that, the Béarnais would have been stabbed,' replied the Cardinal, 'and we could easily have disposed of the children.'

'We are in a bad position here,' said the Duke. 'The revolt in the town will be supported by the States-General. L'Hôpital, whom we have befriended so well, and whose elevation Queen Catherine opposed, is now our foe, and we need the law on our side. The Queen-mother has too many adherents now to allow of our sending her away.—And besides, there are three more boys!'

'She is no longer a mother; she is nothing but a queen,' said the Cardinal. 'In my opinion, this is the very moment to be rid of her. Energy, and again energy! that is what I prescribe.'

Having said this, the Cardinal went back into the King's room, and the Duke followed him. The prelate went straight up to Catherine.

'The papers found on La Sagne, the Prince de Condé's secretary, have been communicated to you,' said he. 'You know that the Bourbons mean to dethrone your children?'

'I know it all,' said the Queen.

'Well, then, will you not have the King of Navarre arrested?'

'There is a Lieutenant-General of the kingdom,' replied she.

At this moment Francis complained of the most violent pain in his ear, and began to moan lamentably.

The physician left the fireplace, where he was warming himself, and came to examine the patient's head.

'Well, Monsieur?' said the Grand Master, addressing him.

'I dare not apply a compress to draw the evil humours. Master Ambroise has undertaken to save his Majesty by an operation, and I should annoy him by doing so.'

'Put it off till to-morrow,' said Catherine calmly, 'and be present, all of you medical men; for you know what calumnies the death of a prince gives ground for.'

She kissed her son's hands and withdrew.

'How coolly that audacious trader's daughter can speak of the Dauphin's death, poisoned as he was by Montecuculli, a Florentine of her suite!' cried Mary Stewart.

'Marie,' said the little King, 'my grandfather never cast a suspicion on her innocence.'

'Cannot we hinder that woman from coming here to-morrow?' said the Queen in an undertone to her two uncles.

'What would become of us if the King should die?' replied the Cardinal. 'Catherine would hurl us all into his grave.'

And so that night the question stood plainly stated between Catherine de' Medici and the House of Lorraine. The arrival of the Chancellor and the Connétable de Montmorency pointed to rebellion, and the dawn of the morrow would prove decisive.

On the following day the Queen-mother was the first to appear. She found no one in her son's room but Mary Stewart, pale and fatigued from having passed the night in prayer by the bedside. The Duchesse de Guise had kept the Queen company, and the maids of honour had relieved each other. The young King was asleep.

Neither the Duke nor the Cardinal had yet appeared. The prelate, more daring than the soldier, had spent this last night, it is said, in vehement argument, without being able to induce the Duke to proclaim himself King.

With the States-General sitting in the town, and the prospect of a battle to be fought with the Constable, the 'Balafré' did not think the opportunity favourable; he refused to arrest the Queen-mother, the Chancellor, Cardinal de Tournon, the Gondis, Ruggieri, and Birague, in face of the revolt that would inevitably result from such violent measures. He made his brother's schemes dependent on the life of Francis II.

Perfect silence reigned in the King's bedchamber. Catherine, attended by Madame de Fieschi, came to the bedside and gazed at her son with an admirable assumption of grief. She held her handkerchief to her eyes, and retreated to the window, where Madame de Fieschi brought her a chair. From thence she could look down into the courtyard.

It had been agreed between Catherine and the Cardinal de Tournon that if Montmorency got safely into the town, he, the Cardinal, would come to her, accompanied by the two Gondis; in case of disaster, he was to come alone. At nine in the morning the two Princes of Lorraine, accompanied by their suite, who remained in the hall, came to the King's room. The captain on duty had informed them that Ambroise Paré had but just arrived with Chapelain and three other physicians, prompted by Catherine, and all hating Ambroise.

In a few minutes the great hall of the Bailliage presented precisely the same appearance as the guardroom at Blois on the day when the Duc de Guise was appointed Lieutenant-General of the kingdom, and when Christophe was tortured; with only this difference, that then love and glee reigned in the royal rooms, and that the Guises were triumphant; whereas now death and grief prevailed, and the Princes of Lorraine felt the power slipping from their grasp.

The maids of honour of the two Queens were grouped on opposite sides of the great fireplace, where an immense fire was blazing. The room was full of courtiers.

The news, repeated no one knows by whom, of a bold plan of Ambroise Paré's for saving the King's life, brought in every gentleman who had any right to appear at Court. The outer steps of the house and the court-yard were thronged with anxious groups. The scaffold erected for the Prince, opposite the Convent of the Récollets, astonished all the nobles. People spoke in whispers, and here, as at Blois, the conversation was a medley of serious and frivolous subjects, of grave and trivial talk. They were beginning to feel used to turmoils, to sudden rebellion, to a rush to arms, to revolts, to the great and sudden events which marked the long period during which the House of Valois was dying out, in spite of Queen Catherine's efforts. Deep silence was kept for some distance outside the bedroom door, where two men-at-arms were on guard, with two pages, and the captain of the Scotch company.

Antoine de Bourbon, a prisoner in his lodgings, finding himself neglected, understood the hopes of the courtiers; he was overwhelmed at hearing of the preparations made during the night for his brother's execution.

In front of the hall fireplace stood one of the finest and grandest figures of his time, the Chancellor de l'Hôpital, in his crimson robes bordered with ermine, and wearing his square cap, in right of his office. This brave man, regarding his benefactors as the leaders of a rebellion, had espoused the cause of his king, as represented by the Queen-mother; and at the risk of his head he had gone to Écouen to consult the Connétable de Montmorency. No one dared to disturb the meditations in which he was plunged. Robertet, the Secretary of State, two marshals of France, Vieilleville and Saint-André, and the Keeper of the Seals, formed a group in front of the Chancellor.

The men of the Court were not actually laughing, but their tone was sprightly, especially among those who were disaffected to the Guises.

The Cardinal had at last secured Stewart, the Scotchman who had murdered President Minard, and was arranging for his trial at Tours. He had also confined in the châteaux of Blois and of Tours a considerable number of gentlemen who had seemed compromised, to inspire a certain degree of terror in the nobles; they, however, were not terrified, but saw in the Reformation a fulcrum for the love of resistance they derived from a feeling of their inborn equality with the King. Now, the prisoners at Blois had contrived to escape, and, by a singular fatality, those who had been shut up at Tours had just followed their example.

'Madame,' said the Cardinal de Châtillon to Madame de Fieschi, 'if any one takes an interest in the prisoners from Tours, they are in the greatest danger.'

On hearing this speech, the Chancellor looked round at the group of the elder Queen's maids of honour.

'Yes, for young Desvaux, the Prince de Condé's equerry, who was imprisoned at Tours, added a bitter jest to his escape. He is said to have written a note to Messieurs de Guise to this effect:—

'"We have heard of the escape of your prisoners at Blois; it has grieved us so much, that we are about to run after them; we will bring them back to you as soon as we have arrested them."'

Though he relished this pleasantry, the Chancellor looked sternly at Monsieur de Châtillon.

At this instant louder voices were heard in the King's bedchamber. The two marshals, with Robertet and the Chancellor, went forward, for it was not merely a question of life and death to the King; everybody was in the secret of the danger to the Chancellor, to Catherine, and to her adherents. The silence that ensued was absolute.

Ambroise had examined the King; the moment seemed favourable for the operation; if it were not

performed, he might die at any moment. As soon as the brothers de Guise came in, he explained to them the causes of the King's sufferings, and demonstrated that in such extremities trepanning was absolutely necessary. He only awaited the decision of the physicians.

'Pierce my son's skull as if it were a board, and with that horrible instrument!' cried Catherine de' Medici. 'Maître Ambroise, I will not permit it.'

The doctors were consulting, but Catherine spoke so loud that, as she intended, her words were heard in the outer room.

'But, Madam, if that is the only hope of saving him?' said Mary Stewart, weeping.

'Ambroise,' said Catherine, 'remember that you answer for the King with your head.'

'We are opposed to the means proposed by Maître Ambroise,' said the three physicians. 'The King may be saved by injecting a remedy into the ear which will release the humours through that passage.'

The Duc de Guise, who was studying Catherine's face, suddenly went up to her, and led her into the window-bay.

'You, Madam,' said he, 'wish your son to die; you are in collusion with your enemies, and that since we came from Blois. This morning Councillor Viole told your furrier's son that the Prince de Condé was to be beheaded. That young man, who, under torture, had denied all knowledge of the Prince de Condé, gave him a farewell greeting as he passed the window of the lad's prison. You looked on at your hapless accomplice's sufferings with royal indifference. Now, you are opposed to your eldest son's life being saved. You will force us to believe that the death of the Dauphin, which placed the crown on the head of the late King, was not natural, but that Montecuculli was your——'

'Monsieur le Chancelier!' Catherine called out, and at this signal Madame de Fieschi threw open the double doors of the bedchamber.

The persons assembled in the hall could thus see the whole scene in the King's room: the little King, deadly pale, his features sunk, his eyes dim, but repeating the word 'Marie,' while he held the hand of the young Queen, who was weeping; the Duchesse de Guise standing, terrified by Catherine's audacity; the two Princes of Lorraine, not less anxious, but keeping close to the Queen-mother, and resolved to have her arrested by Maillé-Brézé; and finally, the great surgeon Ambroise Paré, with the King's physician. He stood holding his instruments, but not daring to perform the operation, for which perfect quiet was as necessary as the approbation of the medical authorities.'

'Monsieur le Chancelier,' said Catherine, 'Messieurs de Guise wish to authorise a strange operation on the King's person. Ambroise proposes to perforate his head. I, as his mother, and one of the commission of Regency, protest against what seems to me to be high treason. The three physicians are in favour of an injection which, to me, seems quite as efficacious and less dangerous than the cruel process recommended by Ambroise.'

At these words there was a dull murmur in reply. The Cardinal admitted the Chancellor, and then shut the bedroom doors.

'But I am Lieutenant-General of the realm,' said the Duc de Guise, 'and you must understand, Monsieur le Chancelier, that Ambroise, surgeon to his Majesty, answers for the King's life.'

'Well, since this is the state of affairs,' said the great Ambroise Paré, 'I know what to be doing.'

He put out his arm over the bed.

'This bed and the King are mine,' said he. 'I constitute myself the sole master, and singly responsible; I know the duties of my office, and I will operate on the King without the physicians' sanction.'

'Save him!' cried the Cardinal, 'and you shall be the richest man in France.'

'Only go on!' said Mary Stewart, pressing Paré's hand.

'I cannot interfere,' said the Chancellor, 'but I shall record the Queen-mother's protest.'

'Robertet,' the Duc de Guise called out.

Robertet came in, and the Duke pointed to the Chancellor.

'You are Chancellor of France,' he said, 'in the place of this felon. Monsieur de Maillé, take Monsieur de l'Hôpital to prison with the Prince de Condé.—As to you, Madam,' and he turned to Catherine, 'your protest will not be recognised, and you would do well to remember that such actions need the support of adequate force. I am acting as a faithful and loyal subject of King Francis II., my sovereign.—Proceed, Ambroise,' he said to the surgeon.

'Monsieur de Guise,' said l'Hôpital, 'if you use any violence, either on the person of the King or on that of his Chancellor, remember that in the hall without there is enough French nobility to arrest all traitors.'

'Gentlemen, gentlemen,' said the surgeon, 'if you prolong this debate, you may as well shout "Vive Charles IX.," for King Francis is dying.'

Catherine stood unmoved, looking out of window.

'Well, then, we will use force to remain masters in the King's bedroom,' said the Cardinal, trying to keep the door; but he was startled and horrified, for the great hall was quite deserted. The Court, sure that the King was dying, had gone back to Antoine of Navarre.

'Come; do it, do it,' cried Mary Stewart to Ambroise. —'I and you, Duchess,' she said to Madame de Guise, 'will protect you.'

'Nay, Madam,' said Paré, 'my zeal carried me too far; the doctors, with the exception of my friend Chapelain, are in favour of the injection; I must yield to them. If I were physician and surgeon-in-chief, he could be saved!—Give it me,' he said, taking a small

syringe from the hand of the chief physician, and filling it.

'Good God!' cried Mary Stewart; 'I command you——'

'Alas! Madam,' replied Paré, 'I am subordinate to these gentlemen.'

The young Queen and the Duchesse de Guise stood between the surgeon and the doctors and the other persons present. The chief physician held the King's head, and Ambroise made the injection into the ear. The two Princes of Lorraine were watchful; Robertet and Monsieur de Maillé stood motionless. At a sign from Catherine, Madame de Fieschi left the room unnoticed. At the same instant l'Hôpital boldly threw open the door of the King's bedroom.

'I have arrived in the nick of time,' exclaimed a man, whose hasty steps rang through the hall, and who, in another minute, was at the door of the King's room. 'What, gentlemen! You thought to cut off my fine nephew, the Prince de Condé's head?—You have roused the lion from his lair, and here he is!' added the Connétable de Montmorency.—'Ambroise, you are not to stir up my King's brains with your instruments! The Kings of France do not allow themselves to be knocked about in that way unless by their enemies' sword in fair fight! The first Prince of the Blood, Antoine de Bourbon, the Prince de Condé, the Queen-mother, and the Chancellor are all opposed to the operation.'

To Catherine's great satisfaction, the King of Navarre and the Prince de Condé both made their appearance.

'What is the meaning of this?' said the Duc de Guise, laying his hand on his poniard.

'As Lord High Constable, I have dismissed all the sentinels from their posts. Blood and thunder! we are not in an enemy's country, I suppose. The King our Master is surrounded by his subjects, and the States-General of the realm may deliberate in perfect liberty.

'You, madam, have killed your son!' said Mary Stewart
Drawn and Etched by D. Murray Smith

I have just come from the Assembly, gentlemen; I laid before it the protest of my nephew de Condé, who has been rescued by three hundred gentlemen. You meant to let the royal blood, and to decimate the nobility of France. Henceforth I shall not trust anything you propose, Messieurs de Lorraine. And if you give the order for the King's head to be opened, by this sword, which saved France from Charles v., I say it shall not be done——!'

'All the more so,' said Ambroise Paré, 'because it is too late, suffusion has begun.'

'Your reign is over, gentlemen,' said Catherine to the two Guises, seeing from Paré's manner that there was now no hope.

'You, Madam, have killed your son!' said Mary Stewart, springing like a lioness from the bed to the window, and seizing the Italian Queen by the arm with a vehement clutch.

'My dear,' replied Catherine de' Medici, with a keen, cold look that expressed the hatred she had suppressed for six months past, 'you, to whose violent passion this death is due, will now go to reign over your own Scotland—and you will go to-morrow. I am now Regent in fact as well as in name.'

The three physicians had made a sign to the Queen-mother.

'Gentlemen,' she went on, addressing the Guises, 'it is an understood thing between Monsieur de Bourbon—whom I hereby appoint Lieutenant-General of the kingdom—and myself that the conduct of affairs is our business.—Come, Monsieur le Chancelier.'

'The King is dead!' said the Grand Master, obliged to carry out the functions of his office.

'God save King Charles IX.!' cried the gentlemen who had come with the King of Navarre, the Prince de Condé, and the Constable.

The ceremonies performed when a King of France

dies were carried out in solitude. When the king-at-arms called out three times in the great hall, 'The King is dead!' after the official announcement by the Duc de Guise, there were but a few persons present to answer—'God save the King!'

The Queen-mother, to whom the Countess Fieschi brought the Duc d'Orléans, now Charles IX., left the room leading the boy by the hand, and followed by the whole Court. Only the two Guises, the Duchesse de Guise, Mary Stewart, and Dayelle remained in the room where Francis II. had breathed his last, with two guards at the door, the Grand Master's pages and the Cardinal's, and their two private secretaries.

'Vive la France!' shouted some of the Reformers, a first cry of opposition.

Robertet, who owed everything to the Duke and the Cardinal, terrified by their schemes and their abortive attempts, secretly attached himself to the Queen-mother, whom the Ambassadors of Spain, England, the German Empire, and Poland met on the stairs, at their head Cardinal Tournon, who had gone to call them after looking up from the courtyard to Catherine de' Medici just as she was protesting against Ambroise Paré's operation.

'Well, the sons of Louis d'Outre-Mer, the descendants of Charles de Lorraine, have proved cravens,' said the Cardinal to the Duke.

'They would have been packed off to Lorraine,' replied his brother. 'I declare to you, Charles,' he went on, 'if the crown were there for the taking, I would not put out my hand for it. That will be my son's task.'

'Will he ever have the army and the Church on his side as you have?'

'He will have something better.'

'What?'

'The people.'

'And there is no one to mourn for him but me—the poor boy who loved me so well!' said Mary Stewart, holding the cold hand of her first husband.

'How can we be reconciled to the Queen?' said the Cardinal.

'Wait till she quarrels with the Huguenots,' said the Duchess.

The clashing interests of the House of Bourbon, of Catherine, of the Guises, and of the Reformers produced such confusion in Orleans, that it was not till three days after that the King's body, quite forgotten where it lay, was placed in a coffin by obscure serving men, and carried to Saint-Denis in a covered vehicle, followed only by the Bishop of Senlis and two gentlemen. When this dismal little procession arrived at the town of Etampes, a follower of the Chancellor de l'Hôpital attached to the hearse this bitter inscription, which history has recorded: 'Tanneguy du Chastel, where are you? Yet you too were French!' A stinging innuendo, striking at Catherine, Mary Stewart, and the Guises. For what Frenchman does not know that Tanneguy du Chastel spent thirty thousand crowns (a million of francs in these days) on the obsequies of Charles VII., the benefactor of his family?

As soon as the tolling bells announced the death of Francis II., and the Connétable de Montmorency had thrown open the gates of the town, Tourillon went up to his hayloft and made his way to a hiding-place.

'What, can he be dead?' exclaimed the glover.

On hearing the voice, a man rose and replied, '*Prêt à servir*' ('Ready to serve,' or 'Ready, aye ready'), the watchword of the Reformers of Calvin's sect.

This man was Chaudieu, to whom Tourillon related the events of the last week, during which he had left the preacher alone in his hiding-place, with a twelve-ounce loaf for his sole sustenance.

'Be off to the Prince de Condé, brother, ask him for a safe-conduct for me, and find me a horse,' cried the preacher. 'I must set out this moment.'

'Write him a line then, that I may be admitted.'

'Here,' said Chaudieu, after writing a few lines, 'ask for a pass from the King of Navarre, for under existing circumstances I must hasten to Geneva.'

Within two hours all was ready, and the zealous minister was on his way to Geneva, escorted by one of the King of Navarre's gentlemen, whose secretary Chaudieu was supposed to be, and who was the bearer of instructions to the Reformed party in Dauphiné.

Chaudieu's sudden departure was at once permitted, to further the interests of Queen Catherine, who, to gain time, made a bold suggestion which was kept a profound secret. This startling scheme accounts for the agreement so unexpectedly arrived at between the Queen and the leaders of the Protestant party. The crafty woman had, as a guarantee of her good faith, expressed a desire to heal the breach between the two Churches in an assembly which could be neither a Synod, nor a Council, nor a Convocation, for which indeed a new name was needed, and, above all else, Calvin's consent. It may be said in passing, that, when this mystery came out, it led to the alliance of the Guises with the Connétable de Montmorency against Catherine and the King of Navarre—a strange coalition, known to history as the Triumvirate, because the Maréchal de Saint-André was the third person in this purely Catholic combination, to which Catherine's strange proposal for a meeting gave rise. The Guises were then enabled to judge very shrewdly of Catherine's policy; they saw that the Queen cared little enough for this assembly, and only wanted to temporise with her allies till Charles IX. should be of age; indeed, they deceived Montmorency by making him believe in a collusion between Catherine and the Bourbons, while Catherine was taking them all

in. The Queen, it will be seen, had in a short time made great strides.

The spirit of argument and discussion which was then in the air was particularly favourable to this scheme. The Catholics and the Huguenots were all to shine in turn in this tournament of words. Indeed, that is exactly what happened. Is it not extraordinary that historians should have mistaken the Queen's shrewdest craft for hesitancy? Catherine never went more directly to the end she had in view than when she seemed to have turned her back on it. So the King of Navarre, incapable of fathoming Catherine's motives, despatched Chaudieu to Calvin; Chaudieu having secretly intended to watch the course of events at Orleans, where he ran, every hour, the risk of being seized and hanged without trial, like any man who had been condemned to banishment.

At the rate of travelling then possible Chaudieu could not reach Geneva before the month of February, the negotiations could not be completed till March, and the meeting could not be called till the beginning of May 1561. Catherine intended to amuse the Court meanwhile, and lull party-feeling by the King's coronation, and by his first Bed of Justice in the Parlement when L'Hôpital and de Thou passed the royal letter, by which Charles IX. intrusted the Government of the kingdom to his mother, seconded by Antoine de Navarre as Lieutenant-General of the realm—the weakest prince of his time.

Was it not one of the strangest things of that day to see a whole kingdom in suspense for the Yea or Nay of a French citizen, risen from obscurity, and living at Geneva? The Pope of Rome held in check by the Pope of Geneva? The two Princes of Lorraine, once so powerful, paralysed by the brief concord between the first Prince of the Blood, the Queen-mother, and Calvin? Is it not one of the most pregnant lessons that

history has preserved to kings, a lesson that should teach them to judge of men, to give genius its due without any hesitation, and to seek it out, as Louis XIV. did, wherever God has hidden it?

Calvin, whose real name was not Calvin, but Cauvin, was the son of a cooper at Noyon, in Picardy. Calvin's birthplace accounts to a certain degree for the obstinacy mingled with eccentric irritability which characterised the arbiter of the destinies of France in the sixteenth century. No one is less known than this man, who was the maker of Geneva and of the spirit of its people. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who knew little of history, was utterly ignorant of this man's influence on his Republic.

At first, indeed, Calvin, dwelling in one of the humblest houses in the upper town, near the Protestant Church of Saint-Pierre, over a carpenter's shop—one point of resemblance between him and Robespierre—had no great authority in Geneva. His influence was for a long time checked by the hatred of the Genevese.

In the sixteenth century Geneva could boast of Farel, one of those famous citizens who have remained unknown to the world, some of them even to Geneva itself. In the year 1537, or thereabouts, this Farel attached Calvin to Geneva by pointing out to him that it might become the stronghold of a reformation more thorough than that of Luther. Farel and Cauvin looked on Lutheranism as an incomplete achievement, ineffectual, and with no hold on France. Geneva, lying between France and Italy, speaking the French tongue, was admirably placed for communicating with Germany, Italy, and France. Calvin adopted Geneva as the seat of his spiritual fortunes, and made it the citadel of his dogmas. At Farel's request, the town council of Geneva authorised Calvin to lecture on theology in the month of September 1538. Calvin left preaching to Farel, his first disciple, and patiently devoted himself to teaching his doctrine. His authority, which in the

later years of his life was paramount, took long to establish. The great leader met with serious difficulties; he was even banished from Geneva for some time in consequence of the austerity of his doctrines. There was a party of very good folks who clung to their old luxury and the customs of their fathers. But, as is always the case, these worthy people dreaded ridicule; they would not admit what was the real object of their struggles, and the battle was fought over details apart from the real question.

Calvin insisted on leavened bread being used for the Sacrament, and on there being no holy days but Sunday. These innovations were disapproved of at Berne and at Lausanne. The Genevese were required to conform to the ritual of Switzerland. Calvin and Farel resisted; their political enemies made a pretext of this refractoriness to exile them from Geneva, whence they were banished for some years. At a later period Calvin came back in triumph, invited by his flock.

Such persecution is always a consecration of moral power when the prophet can wait. And this return was the era of this Mahomet. Executions began, and Calvin organised his religious Terror. As soon as this commanding spirit reappeared, he was admitted to the citizenship of Geneva; but after fourteen years' residence there, he was not yet on the Council. At the time when Catherine was despatching a minister to treat with him, this king in the realm of thought had no title but that of Pastor of the Church of Geneva. Indeed, Calvin never had more than a hundred and fifty francs a year in money, fifteen hundred-weight of corn and two casks of wine for his whole remuneration. His brother, a tailor, kept a shop a few paces away from the Place Saint-Pierre, in a street where one of Calvin's printing-places may still be seen.

Such disinterestedness, which in Voltaire and Bacon was lacking, but which is conspicuous in the life of Rabelais,

of Campanella, of Luther, of Vico, of Descartes, of Malebranche, of Spinoza, of Loyola, of Kant, and of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, surely forms a noble setting for these sublime and ardent souls.

Robespierre's life, so like that of Calvin, can alone perhaps enable our contemporaries to understand Calvin's. He, founding his power on a similar basis, was as cruel and as tyrannical as the Arras lawyer. It is strange too that Picardy—Arras and Noyon—should have given to the world these two great instruments of reform. Those who examine into the motives of the executions ordered by Calvin will find, on a different scale, no doubt, all of 1793 at Geneva. Calvin had Jacques Gruet beheaded 'for having written impious letters and worldly verse, and laboured to overthrow Church ordinances.' Just consider this sentence, and ask yourself if the worst despotism can show in its annals a more absurdly preposterous indictment.

Valentin Gentilis, condemned to death for involuntary heresy, escaped the scaffold only by making more humiliating amends than ever were inflicted by the Catholic Church. Seven years before the conference presently to be held in Calvin's house on the Queen-mother's proposals, Michel Servet (or Servetus), a Frenchman, passing through Geneva, was put in prison, tried, condemned on Calvin's testimony, and burnt alive for having attacked the mystery of the Trinity in a work which had not been either composed or printed at Geneva. Compare with this the eloquent defence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose book, attacking the Catholic religion, written in France, and published in Holland, was indeed burnt by the hand of the executioner; but the writer, a foreigner, was only banished from the kingdom, where he had been trying to strike at the fundamental truths of religion and government; and compare the conduct of the Parlement with that of the Genevese tyrant.

Bolsée, again, was brought to judgment for having other ideas than Calvin on the subject of predestination. Weigh all this, and say whether Fouquier-Tinville did anything worse. Calvin's fierce religious intolerance was, morally speaking, more intense, more implacable, than the fierce political intolerance of Robespierre. On a wider stage than was offered by Geneva, Calvin would have shed more blood than the terrible apostle of political equality, as compared with Catholic equality.

Three centuries earlier a monk, also a son of Picardy, had led the whole of Western Europe to invade the East. Peter the Hermit, Calvin, and Robespierre, sons of the same soil, at intervals of three centuries, were, in a political sense, the levers of Archimedes. Each in turn was an embodied idea finding its fulcrum in the interests of man.

Calvin is, beyond doubt, the—almost unrecognised—maker of that dismal town of Geneva, where, only ten years since, a man, pointing out a carriage gate—the first in the town, for till then there had only been house doors in Geneva—said, 'Through that gate luxury drove into Geneva.' Calvin, by the severity of his sentences and the austerity of his doctrine, introduced the hypocritical feeling that has been well called Puritanism [the nearest English equivalent perhaps to the French word *mômerie*]. Good conduct, according to the *môміers* or puritans, lay in renouncing the arts and the graces of life, in eating well but without luxury, and in silently amassing money without enjoying it otherwise than as Calvin enjoyed his power—in fancy.

Calvin clothed the citizens in the same gloomy livery as he threw over life in general. He formed in the Consistory a perfect Calvinist inquisition, exactly like the revolutionary tribunal instituted by Robespierre. The Consistory handed over the victims to be condemned by the Council, which Calvin ruled through the Consistory just as Robespierre ruled the Convention

through the Jacobin Club. Thus an eminent magistrate of Geneva was sentenced to two months' imprisonment, to lose his office, and to be prohibited from ever filling any other, because he led a dissolute life and had made friends among Calvin's foes. In this way Calvin was actually a legislator; it was he who created the austere manners, sober, respectable, hideously dull, but quite irreproachable, which have remained unchanged in Geneva to this day; they prevailed there indeed before the English habits were formed that are universally known as Puritanism, under the influence of the Cameronians, the followers of Caméron, a Frenchman who trod in Calvin's steps. These manners have been admirably described by Walter Scott.

The poverty of this man, an absolute sovereign, who treated as a power with other powers, asking for their treasure, demanding armies, and filling his hands with their money for the poor, proves that the Idea, regarded as the sole means of dominion, begets political misers, men whose only enjoyment is intellectual, and who, like the Jesuits, love power for its own sake. Pitt, Luther, Calvin, and Robespierre, all these *Harpagons* in greed of dominion, died penniless. History has preserved the inventory made in Calvin's rooms after his death, and everything, including his books, was valued at fifty crowns. Luther's possessions amounted to as much; indeed, his widow, the famous Catherine de Bora, was obliged to petition for a pension of fifty crowns bestowed on her by a German Elector.

Potemkin, Mazarin, and Richelieu, men of thought and action, who all three founded or prepared the foundations of empires, each left three hundred millions of francs; but these men had a heart, they loved women and the arts, they built and conquered; while, with the exception of Luther, whose wife was the Helen of this Iliad, none of the others could accuse himself of ever having felt his heart throb for a woman.

This brief history was needed to explain Calvin's position at Geneva.

One day early in February 1561, on one of the mild evenings which occur at that time of year on the shores of Lake Léman, two men on horseback arrived at Pré-l'Évêque, so called from the ancient residence of the Bishop of Geneva, driven out thirty years before. These two men, acquainted, no doubt, with the laws of Geneva as to the closing of the gates, very necessary then, and absurd enough in these days, rode towards the Porte de Rives; but they suddenly drew rein at the sight of a man of fifty, walking with the help of a woman-servant's arm, and evidently returning to the town. This personage, rather stout in figure, walked slowly and with difficulty, dragging one foot before the other with evident pain, and wearing broad, laced shoes of black velvet.

'It is he,' said Chaudieu's companion, who dismounted, gave his bridle to the preacher, and went forward open-armed to meet the master.

The man on foot, who was in fact Jean Calvin, drew back to avoid the embrace, and cast the severest glance at his disciple. At the age of fifty Calvin looked like a man of seventy. Thick-set and fat, he seemed all the shorter because frightful pain from the stone obliged him to walk much bent. These sufferings were complicated with attacks of the worst form of gout. Anybody might have quaked at the aspect of that face, almost as broad as it was long, and bearing no more signs of good-nature, in spite of its roundness, than that of the dreadful King Henry VIII., whom Calvin, in fact, resembled. His sufferings, which never gave him a reprieve, were visible in two deep furrows on each side of his nose, following the line of his moustache, and ending, like it, in a full grey beard.

This face, though red and inflamed like a drunkard's, showed patches where his complexion was yellow; still,

and in spite of the velvet cap that covered his massive, broad head, it was possible to admire a large and nobly formed forehead, and beneath it two sparkling brown eyes, which in moments of wrath could flash fire. Whether by reason of his bulk, or because his neck was too thick and short, or as a consequence of late hours and incessant work, Calvin's head seemed sunk between his broad shoulders, which compelled him to wear a quite shallow, pleated ruff, on which his face rested like John the Baptist's in the charger. Between his moustache and his beard there peeped, like a rose, a sweet and eloquent mouth, small, and fresh, and perfectly formed. This face was divided by a square nose remarkable for its long aquiline outline, resulting in high-lights at the tip, significantly in harmony with the prodigious power expressed in this magnificent head.

Though it was difficult to detect in these features any trace of the constant headaches which tormented Calvin in the intervals of a slow fever that was consuming him, pain, constantly defied by study and a strong will, gave this apparently florid face a terrible tinge, attributable, no doubt, to the hue of the layer of fat due to the sedentary habits of a hard worker. It bore the marks of the perpetual struggle of a sickly temperament against one of the strongest wills known in the history of mankind. Even the lips, though beautiful, expressed cruelty. A chaste life, indispensable to vast projects, and compulsory in such conditions of sickly health, had set its stamp on the face. There was regret in the serenity of that mighty brow, and suffering in the gaze of the eyes, whose calmness was a terror.

Calvin's dress gave effect to his head, for he wore the famous black cloth gown, belted with a cloth band and brass buckle, which was adopted as the costume of Calvinist preachers, and which, having nothing to attract the eye, directed all the spectator's attention to the face.

'I am in too great pain to embrace you, Théodore,' said Calvin to the elegant horseman.

Théodore de Bèze, at that time two-and-forty, and, by Calvin's desire, a free citizen of Geneva for two years past, was the most striking contrast to the terrible minister to whom he had given his allegiance. Calvin, like all men of the middle class who have risen to moral supremacy, like all inventors of a social system, was consumed with jealousy. He abhorred his disciples, would suffer no equal, and could not endure the slightest contradiction. However, between him and Théodore de Bèze the difference was so great; this elegant gentleman, gifted with a charming appearance, polished, courteous, and accustomed to Court life, was, in his eyes, so unlike all his fierce Janissaries, that for him he set aside his usual impulses. He never loved him, for this crabbed lawgiver knew absolutely nothing of friendship; but having no fear of finding his successor in him, he liked to play with Théodore, as Richelieu at a later time played with his cat. He found him pliant and amusing. When he saw that de Bèze succeeded to perfection in every mission, he took delight in the polished tool of which he believed himself to be the soul and guide; so true is it that even those men who seem most surly cannot live without some semblance of affection.

Théodore was Calvin's spoilt child. The great Reformer never scolded him, overlooked his irregularities, his love affairs, his handsome dress, and his choice language. Possibly Calvin was well content to show that the Reformation could hold its own even among Court circles. Théodore de Bèze wanted to introduce a taste for art, letters, and poetry into Geneva, and Calvin would listen to his schemes without knitting his grizzled brows. Thus the contrast of character and person was as complete as the contrast of mind in these two celebrated men.

Calvin accepted Chaudieu's very humble bow, and

replied by slightly bending his head. Chaudieu slipped the bridles of both horses over his right arm and followed the two great Reformers, keeping to the right of Théodore de Bèze, who was walking on Calvin's right. Calvin's housekeeper ran forward to prevent the gate being shut, by telling the captain of the Guard that the Pastor had just had a severe attack of pain.

Théodore de Bèze was a native of the Commune of Vézelay, the first to demand for itself corporate government, of which the curious tale has been told by one of the Thierrys. Thus the spirit of citizenship and resistance which were endemic at Vézelay no doubt contributed an item to the great rising of the Reformers in the person of this man, who is certainly a most singular figure in the history of heresy.

'So you still suffer great pain?' said Théodore to Calvin.

'The sufferings of the damned, a Catholic would say,' replied the Reformer, with the bitterness that coloured his least remarks. 'Ah! I am going fast, my son, and what will become of you when I am gone?'

'We will fight by the light of your writings,' said Chaudieu.

Calvin smiled; his purple face assumed a more gracious expression, and he looked kindly on Chaudieu.

'Well, have you brought me any news?' he asked. 'Have they killed a great many of us?' he added, with a smile, and a sort of mocking glee sparkled in his brown eyes.

'No,' said Chaudieu; 'peace is the order of the day.'

'So much the worse, so much the worse!' cried Calvin. 'Every form of peace would be a misfortune if it were not always, in fact, a snare. Our strength lies in persecution. Where should we be if the Church took up the Reformation?'

'Indeed,' said Théodore, 'that is what the Queen-mother seems inclined to do.'

'She is quite capable of it,' said Calvin. 'I am studying that woman.'

'From hence?' cried Chaudieu.

'Does distance exist for the spirit?' said Calvin severely, regarding the interruption as irreverent. 'Catherine longs for power, and women who aim at that lose all sense of honour and faith.—What is in the wind?'

'Well, she suggests a sort of Council,' said Théodore de Bèze.

'Near Paris?' asked Calvin roughly.

'Yes.'

'Ah! that is well!' said Calvin.

'And we are to try to come to an understanding, and draw up a public Act to consolidate the two Churches.'

'Ah! if only she had courage enough to separate the French Church from the Court of Rome, and to create a patriarch in France, as in the Greek Church!' cried the Reformer, whose eyes glistened at this idea, which would place him on a throne. 'But, my son, can a Pope's niece be truthful? She only wants to gain time.'

'And do not we need time to recover from our check at Amboise, and to organise some formidable resistance in various parts of the kingdom?'

'She has sent away the Queen of Scotland,' said Chaudieu.

'That is one less, then,' said Calvin, as they passed through the Porte de Rives. 'Elizabeth of England will keep her busy. Two neighbouring queens will soon be fighting; one is handsome, and the other ugly enough—a first cause of irritation; and then there is the question of legitimacy——'

He rubbed his hands, and his glee had such a ferocious taint that de Bèze shuddered, for he too saw the pool of blood at which his master was gazing.

'The Guises have provoked the House of Bourbon,'

said de Bèze after a pause; 'they broke the stick between them at Orleans.'

'Ay,' said Calvin; 'and you, my son, did not believe me when, as you last started for Nérac, I told you that we should end by stirring up war to the death between the two branches of the royal family of France.

'So at last I have a court, a king, a dynasty on my side. My doctrine has had its effect on the masses. The citizen class understand me; henceforth they will call those who go to Mass idolaters, those who paint the walls of their place of worship, and put up pictures and statues there. Oh, the populace find it far easier to demolish cathedrals and palaces than to discuss justification by faith or the real presence! Luther was a wrangler, I am an army! He was a reasoner, I am a system! He, my child, was but a tormentor, I am a Tarquin!

'Yes, they of the truth will destroy churches, will tear down pictures, will make millstones of the statues to grind the bread of the people. There are bodies in great States, I will have only individuals; bodies are too resistant, and see clearly when individuals are blind.

'Now, we must combine this agitating doctrine with political interests, to consolidate it and to keep up the material of my armies. I have satisfied the logic of thrifty minds and thinking brains by this bare, undecorated worship which lifts religion into the sphere of the ideal. I have made the mob understand the advantages of the suppression of ceremonial.

'Now it is your part, Théodore, to enlist people's interests. Do not overstep that line. In the way of doctrine everything has been done, everything has been said; add not one jot! Why does Caméron, that little *pasteur* in Gascony, meddle with writing?'

Calvin, Théodore de Bèze, and Chaudieu went along the streets of the upper town and through the crowd, without any attention being paid to the men who were

unchaining the mob in cities and ravaging France. After this terrifying harangue, they walked on in silence, till they reached the little square of Saint-Pierre, and made their way towards the minister's dwelling. Calvin's lodging consisted of three rooms on the second floor of this house, which is hardly known, and of which no one ever tells you in Geneva—where, indeed, there is no statue to Calvin. The rooms were floored and wainscoted with pine, and on one side there were a kitchen and a servant's room. The entrance, as is commonly the case in Genevese houses, was through the kitchen, which opened into a small room with two windows, parlour, dining, and drawing-room in one. Next to this was the study where, for fourteen years, Calvin's mind had carried on the battle with pain, and beyond was his bedroom. Four oak chairs with tapestry seats, placed round a long table, formed all the furniture of the sitting-room. A white earthenware stove in one corner of the room gave out a pleasant warmth; panelling of unvarnished pine covered the walls, and there was no other decoration. The bareness of the place was quite in keeping with the frugal and simple life led by the Reformer.

'Well,' said de Bèze, as he went in, taking advantage of a few minutes when Chaudieu had left them to put up the horses at a neighbouring inn, 'what am I to do? Will you agree to this meeting?'

'Certainly,' said Calvin. 'You, my son, will bear the brunt of the struggle. Be decisive, absolute. Nobody, neither the Queen, nor the Guises, nor I want pacification as a result; it would not suit our purpose. I have much confidence in Duplessis-Mornay. Give him the leading part. We are alone——' said he, with a suspicious glance into the kitchen, of which the door was open, showing two shirts and some collars hung to dry on a line. 'Go and shut all the doors.—Well,' he went on, when Théodore had done his bidding, 'we must compel the King of Navarre to join the Guises and

the Connétable de Montmorency, by advising him to desert Queen Catherine de' Medici. Let us take full advantage of his weakness; he is but a poor creature. If he prove a turncoat to the Italian woman, she, finding herself bereft of his support, must inevitably join the Prince de Condé and Coligny. Such a manœuvre may possibly compromise her so effectually that she must remain on our side——'

Théodore de Bèze raised the hem of Calvin's gown and kissed it.

'Oh, master,' said he, 'you are indeed great!'

'Unfortunately, I am dying, my dear Théodore. If I should die before seeing you again,' he went on, whispering in the ear of his Minister for Foreign Affairs, 'remember to strike a great blow by the hand of one of our martyrs.'

'Another Minard to be killed?'

'Higher than a lawyer.'

'A king?'

'Higher still. The man who wants to be King.'

'The Duc de Guise!' cried Théodore, with a gesture of dismay.

'Well,' cried Calvin, fancying that he discerned refusal, or at least an instinct of resistance, and failing to notice the entrance of Chaudieu, 'have we not a right to strike as we are struck? Yes, and in darkness and silence! May we not return wound for wound, and death for death? Do the Catholics hesitate to lay snares for us and kill us? I trust to you! Burn their churches. Go on, my sons! If you have any devoted youths——'

'I have,' Chaudieu put in.

'Use them as weapons of war. To triumph, we may use every means. The Balafré, that terrible man of war, is, like me, more than a man; he is a dynasty, as I am a system; he is capable of annihilating us! Death to the Duc de Guise!'

'I should prefer a peaceful victory, brought about by time and reason,' said de Bèze.

'By time!' cried Calvin, flinging over his chair. 'By reason! Are you mad? Conquer by reason? Do you know nothing of men, you who live among them—idiot? What is so fatal to my teaching, thrice-dyed simpleton, is that it is based on reason. By the thunders of Saint Paul, by the sword of the Mighty! Pumpkin as you are, Théodore, cannot you see the power that the catastrophe at Amboise has given to my reforms? Ideas can never grow till they are watered with blood. The murder of the Duc de Guise would give rise to a fearful persecution, and I hope for it with all my might! To us reverses are more favourable than success! The Reformation can be beaten and endure, do you hear, oaf? Whereas Catholicism is overthrown if we win a single battle.

'What are these lieutenants of mine? Wet rags and not men! Guts on two legs! Christened baboons! O God, wilt Thou not grant me another ten years to live? If I die too soon, the cause of religion is lost in the hands of such rascals!

'You are as helpless as Antoine de Navarre! Begone! leave me! I must have a better messenger! You are an ass, a popinjay, a poet! Go, write your Catullics, your Tibullics, your acrostics! Hoo!'

The pain he suffered was entirely swamped by the fires of his wrath. Gout vanished before this fearful excitement. Calvin's face was blotched with purple, like the sky before a storm. His broad forehead shone. His eyes flashed fire. He was not like the same man. He let himself give way to this sort of epileptic frenzy, almost madness, which was habitual with him; but, then, struck by the silence of his two listeners, and observing Chaudieu, who said to de Bèze, 'The burning bush of Horeb!' the minister sat down, was dumb, and covered his face with his hands, with their thickened joints, and his fingers quivered in spite of their strength.

A few minutes later, while still trembling from the

last shocks of this tempest—the result of his austere life—he said in a broken voice—

'My vices, which are many, are less hard to subdue than my impatience! Ah! wild beast, shall I never conquer you?' he exclaimed, striking his breast.

'My beloved master,' said de Bèze in a caressing tone, taking his hands and kissing them, 'Jove thunders, but he can smile.'

Calvin looked at his disciple with a softened expression.

'Do not misunderstand me, my friends,' he said.

'I understand that the shepherds of nations have terrible burthens to bear,' replied Théodore. 'You have a world on your shoulders.'

'I,' said Chaudieu, who had become thoughtful under the master's abuse, 'have three martyrs on whom we can depend. Stewart, who killed the President, is free——'

'That will not do,' said Calvin mildly, and smiling, as a great man can smile when fair weather follows a storm on his face, as if he were ashamed of the tempest. 'I know men. He who kills one President will not kill a second.'

'Is it absolutely necessary?' said de Bèze.

'What, again?' cried Calvin, his nostrils expanding. 'There, go; you will put me in a rage again. You have my decision.—You, Chaudieu, walk in your own path, and keep the Paris flock together. God be with you.—Dinah! Light my friends out.'

'Will you not allow me to embrace you?' said de Bèze with emotion. 'Who can tell what the morrow will bring forth? We may be imprisoned in spite of safe-conducts——'

'And yet you want to spare them!' said Calvin, embracing de Bèze.

He took Chaudieu's hand, saying—

'Mind you, not Huguenots, not Reformers: be Calvinists! Speak only of Calvinism.—Alas! this is

not ambition, for I am a dying man!—Only, everything of Luther's must be destroyed, to the very names of Lutheran and Lutheranism.'

'Indeed, divine man, you deserve such honour!' cried Chaudieu.

'Uphold uniformity of creed. Do not allow any further examination or reconstruction. If new sects arise from among us, we are lost.'

To anticipate events and dismiss Théodore de Bèze, who returned to Paris with Chaudieu, it may be said that Poltrot, who, eighteen months later, fired a pistol at the Duc de Guise, confessed, under torture, that he had been urged to the crime by Théodore de Bèze; however, he retracted this statement at a later stage. Indeed, Bossuet, who weighed all the historical evidence, did not think that the idea of this attempt was due to Théodore de Bèze. Since Bossuet, however, a dissertation of an apparently trivial character, *à propos* to a famous ballad, enabled a compiler of the eighteenth century to prove that the song sung throughout France by the Huguenots on the death of the Duc de Guise was written by Théodore de Bèze; and, moreover, that the well-known ballad or lament on Malbrouck—the Duke of Marlborough—is plagiarised from Théodore de Bèze.[1]

On the day when Théodore de Bèze and Chaudieu reached Paris, the Court had returned thither from Reims, where Charles IX. had been crowned. This ceremony, to which Catherine gave unusual splendour, making it the occasion of great festivities, enabled her to gather round her the leaders of every faction.

After studying the various parties and interests, she saw a choice of two alternatives—either to enlist them on the side of the Throne, or to set them against each other. The Connétable de Montmorency, above all else a Catholic, whose nephew, the Prince de Condé, was the

[1] See note at the end of this volume.

leader of the Reformation, and whose children also had a leaning to that creed, blamed the Queen-mother for allying herself with that party. The Guises, on their side, worked hard to gain over Antoine de Bourbon, a Prince of no strength of character, and attach him to their faction, and his wife, the Queen of Navarre, informed by de Bèze, allowed this to be done. These difficulties checked Catherine, whose newly-acquired authority needed a brief period of tranquillity; she impatiently awaited Calvin's reply by de Bèze and Chaudieu, sent to the great Reformer on behalf of the Prince de Condé, the King of Navarre, Coligny, d'Andelot, and Cardinal de Châtillon.

Meanwhile, the Queen-mother was true to her promises to the Prince de Condé. The Chancellor quashed the trial, in which Christophe was involved, by referring the case to the Paris Parlement, and they annulled the sentence pronounced by the Commission, declaring it incompetent to try a Prince of the Blood. The Parlement re-opened the trial by the desire of the Guises and the Queen-mother. La Sagne's papers had been placed in Catherine's hands, and she had burnt them. This sacrifice was the first pledge given, quite vainly, by the Guises to the Queen-mother. The Parlement, not having this decisive evidence, re-instated the Prince in all his rights, possessions, and honours.

Christophe, thus released when Orleans was in all its excitement over the King's accession, was excluded from the case, and, as a compensation for his sufferings, was passed as a pleader by Monsieur de Thou.

The Triumvirate—the coalition of interests which were imperilled by Catherine's first steps in authority—was hatching under her very eyes. Just as in chemistry hostile elements fly asunder at the shock that disturbs their compulsory union, so in politics the alliance of antagonistic interests can never last long. Catherine fully understood that, sooner or later, she must fall back

on the Connétable and the Guises to fight the Huguenots. The convocation, which served to flatter the vanity of the orators on each side, and as an excuse for another imposing ceremony after that of the coronation, to clear the blood-stained field for the religious war that had, indeed, already begun, was as futile in the eyes of the Guises as it was in Catherine's. The Catholics could not fail to be the losers; for the Huguenots, under the pretence of discussion, would be able to proclaim their doctrine in the face of all France, under the protection of the King and his mother. The Cardinal de Lorraine, flattered by Catherine into the hope of conquering the heretics by the eloquence of the Princes of the Church, induced his brother to consent. To the Queen-mother six months of peace meant much.

A trivial incident was near wrecking the power which Catherine was so laboriously building up. This is the scene as recorded by history; it occurred on the very day when the envoys from Geneva arrived at the Hôtel de Coligny in the Rue Béthisy, not far from the Louvre. At the coronation, Charles IX., who was much attached to his instructor, Amyot, made him High Almoner of France. This affection was fully shared by the Duc d'Anjou (Henri III.), who also was Amyot's pupil.

Catherine heard this from the two Gondis on the way home from Reims to Paris. She had relied on this Crown appointment to gain her a supporter in the Church, and a person of importance to set against the Cardinal de Lorraine; she had intended to bestow it on Cardinal de Tournon, so as to find in him, as in l'Hôpital, a second crutch—to use her own words. On arriving at the Louvre, she sent for the preceptor. Her rage at seeing the catastrophe that threatened her policy from the ambition of this self-made man—the son of a shoemaker—was such that she addressed him in this strange speech recorded by certain chroniclers—

'What! I can make the Guises cringe, the Colignys,

the Montmorencys, the House of Navarre, the Prince de Condé, and I am to be baulked by a priestling like you, who were not content to be Bishop of Auxerre!'

Amyot excused himself. He had, in fact, asked for nothing; the King had appointed him of his own free will to this office, of which he, a humble teacher, regarded himself as unworthy.

'Rest assured, Master,' for it was by this name that the Kings Charles IX. and Henri III. addressed this great writer, 'that you will not be left standing for twenty-four hours unless you induce your pupil to change his mind.'

Between death promised him in such an uncompromising way, and the abdication of the highest ecclesiastical office in the kingdom, the shoemaker's son, who had grown covetous, and hoped perhaps for a Cardinal's hat, determined to temporise. He hid in the abbey of Saint-Germain en Laye.

At his first dinner, Charles IX., not seeing Amyot, asked for him. Some Guisard, no doubt, told the King what had passed between Amyot and the Queen-mother.

'What!' cried he, 'has he been made away with because I created him High Almoner?'

He went off to his mother in the violent state of a child when one of his fancies is contravened.

'Madam,' said he, as he entered her room, 'did I not comply with your wishes, and sign the letter you asked of me for the Parlement, by virtue of which you govern my kingdom? Did you not promise me, when you laid it before me, that my will should be yours? and now the only favour I have cared to bestow excites your jealousy.—The Chancellor talks of making me of age at fourteen, three years from hence, and you treat me as a child!—By God, but I mean to be King, and as much a King as my father and grandfather were kings!'

The tone and vehemence with which he spoke these words were a revelation to Catherine of her son's true

character; it was like a blow from a bludgeon on her heart.

'And he speaks thus to me,' thought she, 'to me, who made him King.'—'Monsieur,' she said, 'the business of being King in such times as these is a difficult one, and you do not yet know the master minds you have to deal with. You will never have any true and trustworthy friend but your mother, or other adherents than those whom she long since attached to her, and but for whom you would perhaps not be alive at this day. The Guises are averse both to your position and your person, I would have you know. If they could sew me up in a sack and throw me into the river,' said she, pointing to the Seine, 'they would do it to-night. Those Lorrainers feel that I am a lioness defending her cubs, and that stays the bold hands they stretch out to clutch the crown. To whom, to what is your preceptor attached? where are his allies? what is his authority? what services can he do you? what weight will his words have? Instead of gaining a buttress to uphold your power, you have undermined it.

'The Cardinal de Lorraine threatens you; he plays the King, and keeps his hat on his head in the presence of the first Prince of the Blood; was it not necessary to counterbalance him with another cardinal, invested with authority equal to his own? Is Amyot, a shoemaker who might tie the bows of his shoes, the man to defy him to his face?—Well, well, you are fond of Amyot. You have appointed him! Your first decision shall be respected, my Lord! But before deciding any further, have the kindness to consult me. Listen to reasons of State, and your boyish good sense will perhaps agree with my old woman's experience before deciding, when you know all the difficulties.'

'You must bring back my master!' said the King, not listening very carefully to the Queen, on finding her speech full of reproofs.

'Yes, you shall have him,' replied she. 'But not he, nor even that rough Cypierre, can teach you to reign.'

'It is you, my dear mother,' he exclaimed, mollified by his triumph, and throwing off the threatening and sly expression which Nature had stamped on his physiognomy.

Catherine sent Gondi to find the High Almoner. When the Florentine had discovered Amyot's retreat, and the Bishop heard that the courtier came from the Queen, he was seized with terror, and would not come out of the Abbey. In this extremity Catherine was obliged to write to him himself, and in such terms that he came back and obtained the promise of her support, but only on condition of his obeying her blindly in all that concerned the King.

This little domestic tempest being lulled, Catherine came back to the Louvre. It was more than a year since she had left it, and she now held council with her nearest friends as to how she was to deal with the young King, whom Cypierre had complimented on his firmness.

'What is to be done?' said she to the two Gondis, Ruggieri, Birague, and Chiverni, now tutor and Chancellor to the Duc d'Anjou.

'First of all,' said Birague, 'get rid of Cypierre; he is not a courtier, he will never fall in with your views, and will think he is doing his duty by opposing you.'

'Whom can I trust?' cried the Queen.

'One of us,' said Birague.

'By my faith,' said Gondi, 'I promise to make the King as pliant as the King of Navarre.'

'You let the late King die to save your other children; well, then, do as the grand Signors of Constantinople do: crush this one's passions and fancies,' said Albert de Gondi. 'He likes the arts, poetry, hunting, and a little girl he saw at Orleans; all this is quite enough to occupy him.'

'Then you would be the King's tutor?' said Catherine, to the more capable of the two Gondis.

'If you will give me the necessary authority; it might be well to make me a Marshal of France and a Duke. Cypierre is too small a man to continue in that office. Henceforth the tutor of a King of France should be a Marshal and Duke, or something of the kind——'

'He is right,' said Birague.

'Poetry and hunting,' said Catherine, in a dreamy voice.

'We will hunt and make love!' cried Gondi.

'Besides,' said Chiverni, 'you are sure of Amyot, who will always be afraid of a drugged cup in case of disobedience, and with Gondi you will have the King in leading strings.'

'You were resigned to the loss of one son to save the three others and the Crown; now you must have the courage to keep this one *occupied* to save the kingdom—to save yourself perhaps,' said Ruggieri.

'He has just offended me deeply,' said Catherine.

'He does not know how much he owes you; and if he did, you would not be safe,' Birague replied with grave emphasis.

'It is settled,' said the Queen, on whom this reply had a startling effect; 'you are to be the King's governor, Gondi. The King must make me a return in favour of one of my friends for the concession I have made for that cowardly Bishop. But the fool has lost the Cardinal's hat; so long as I live I will hinder the Pope from fitting it to his head! We should have been very strong with Cardinal de Tournon to support us. What a trio they would have made: he as High Almoner with l'Hôpital and de Thou! As to the citizens of Paris, I mean to make my son coax them over, and we will lean on them.'

And Gondi was, in fact, made a Marshal, created Duc de Retz and tutor to the King, within a few days.

This little council was just over when Cardinal de Tournon came to announce to the Queen the messengers from Calvin. Admiral Coligny escorted them to secure them respectful treatment at the Louvre. The Queen summoned her battalion of maids of honour, and went into the great reception-room built by her husband, which no longer exists in the Louvre of our day.

At that time the staircase of the Louvre was in the clock-tower. Catherine's rooms were in the older part of the building, part of which survives in the Cour du Musée. The present staircase to the galleries was built where the *Salle des ballets* was before it. A *ballet* at that time meant a sort of dramatic entertainment performed by all the Court.

Revolutionary prejudice led to the most ridiculous mistake as to Charles IX. *à propos* to the Louvre. During the Revolution a belief defamatory of this King, whose character has been caricatured, made a monster of him. Chénier's tragedy was written under the provocation of a tablet hung up on the window of the part of the palace that projects towards the Quay. On it were these words, 'From this window Charles IX. of execrable memory fired on the citizens of Paris.' It may be well to point out to future historians and studious persons that the whole of that side of the Louvre, now called the Old Louvre—the projecting wing at a right angle to the Quay, connecting the galleries with the Louvre by what is called the Galerie d'Apollon, and the Louvre with the Tuileries by the picture gallery—was not in existence in the time of Charles IX. The principal part of the site of the river-front, where lies the garden known as le Jardin de l'Infante, was occupied by the Hôtel de Bourbon, which belonged, in fact, to the House of Navarre. It would have been physically impossible for Charles IX. to fire from the *Louvre de Henri II.* on a boat full of Huguenots crossing the Seine, though he could see the river from some windows, which are now built up, in that part of the palace.

Even if historians and libraries did not possess maps in which the Louvre at the time of Charles IX. is perfectly shown, the building bears in itself the refutation of the error. The several Kings who have contributed to this vast structure have never failed to leave their cypher on the work in some form of monogram. The venerable buildings, now all discoloured, of that part of the Louvre that goes down to the Quay bear the initials of Henri II. and of Henri IV.; quite different from those of Henri III., who added to his H Catherine's double C in a way that looks like D to superficial observers. It was Henri IV. who was able to add his own palace, the Hôtel de Bourbon, with its gardens and domain, on to the Louvre. He first thought of uniting Catherine de' Medici's palace to the Louvre by finishing the galleries, of which the exquisite sculpture is too little appreciated.

But if no plan of Paris under Charles IX. were in existence, nor the monograms of the two Henrys, the difference in the architecture would be enough to give the lie to this calumny. The rusticated bosses of the Hôtel de la Force, and of this portion of the Louvre, are precisely characteristic of the transition from the architecture of the Renaissance to the architecture of Henri III., Henri IV., and Louis XIII.

This archæological digression, in harmony, to be sure, with the pictures at the beginning of this narrative, enables us to see the aspect of this other part of Paris, of which nothing now remains but that portion of the Louvre, where the beautiful bas-reliefs are perishing day by day.

When the Court was informed that the Queen was about to give audience to Théodore de Bèze and Chaudieu, introduced by Admiral Coligny, every one who had a right to go into the throne room hastened to be present at this interview. It was about six o'clock; Admiral Coligny had supped, and was picking his teeth as he walked upstairs between the two Calvinists. This

playing with a toothpick was a confirmed habit with the Admiral; he involuntarily picked his teeth in the middle of a battle when meditating a retreat. 'Never trust the Admiral's toothpick, the Constable's "No," or Catherine's "Yes,"'—was one of the proverbs of the Court at the time. And after the massacre of Saint-Bartholomew, the mob made horrible mockery of the Admiral's body, which hung for three days at Montfaucon, by sticking a grotesque toothpick between his teeth. Chroniclers have recorded this hideous jest. And, indeed, this trivial detail in the midst of a tremendous catastrophe is just like the Paris mob, which thoroughly deserves this grotesque parody of a line of Boileau's:—

'Le Français, né malin, créa la guillotine.'

(The Frenchman, a born wag, invented the guillotine.)

In all ages, the Parisians have made fun before, during, and after the most terrible revolutions.

Théodore de Bèze was in Court dress, black silk long hose, slashed shoes, full trunks, a doublet of black silk, also slashed, and a little black velvet cloak, over which fell a fine white ruff, deeply gauffered. He wore the tuft of beard called a *virgule* (a comma) and a moustache, his sword hung by his side, and he carried a cane. All who know the pictures at Versailles, or the portraits by Odieuvre, know his round and almost jovial face, with bright eyes, and the remarkably high and broad forehead, which is characteristic of the poets and writers of that time. De Bèze had a pleasant face, which did him good service. He formed a striking contrast to Coligny, whose austere features are known to all, and to the bitter and bilious-looking Chaudieu, who wore the preacher's gown and Calvinist bands.

The state of affairs in the Chamber of Deputies in our own day, and that, no doubt, in the Convention

too, may enable us to understand how at that Court and at that time persons, who six months after would be fighting to the death and waging heinous warfare, would meanwhile meet, address each other with courtesy, and exchange jests.

When Coligny entered the room, Birague, who would coldly advise the massacre of Saint Bartholomew, and the Cardinal de Lorraine, who would tell his servant Besme not to miss the Admiral, came forward to meet him, and the Piedmontese said, with a smile—

'Well, my dear Admiral, so you have undertaken to introduce these gentlemen from Geneva?'

'And you will count it to me for a crime perhaps,' replied the Admiral in jest, 'while, if you had undertaken it, you would have scored it as a merit.'

'Master Calvin, I hear, is very ill,' said the Cardinal de Lorraine to Théodore de Bèze. 'I hope we shall not be suspected of having stirred his broth for him!'

'Nay, Monseigneur, you would lose too much by that,' said Théodore de Bèze shrewdly.

The Duc de Guise, who was examining Chaudieu, stared at his brother and Birague, who were both startled by this speech.

'By God!' exclaimed the Cardinal, 'heretics are of the right faith in keen politics!'

To avoid difficulties, the Queen, who was announced at this moment, remained standing. She began by conversing with the Connétable, who spoke eagerly of the scandal of her admitting Calvin's envoys to her presence.

'But, you see, my dear Constable, we receive them without ceremony.'

'Madam,' said the Admiral, approaching Catherine, 'these are the two doctors of the new religion who have come to an understanding with Calvin, and have taken his instructions as to a meeting where the various Churches of France may compromise their differences.'

'This is Monsieur Théodore de Bèze, my wife's very great favourite,' said the King of Navarre, coming forward and taking de Bèze by the hand.

'And here is Chaudieu!' cried the Prince de Condé. 'My friend the Duc de Guise knows the captain,' he added, looking at le Balafré; 'perhaps he would like to make acquaintance with the minister.'

This sally made everybody laugh, even Catherine.

'By my troth,' said the Duc de Guise, 'I am delighted to see a man who can so well choose a follower, and make use of him in his degree. One of your men,' said he to the preacher, 'endured, without dying or confessing anything, the extreme of torture; I fancy myself brave, but I do not know that I could endure so well!'

'Hm!' observed Ambroise Paré, 'you said not a word when I pulled the spear out of your face at Calais.'

Catherine, in the middle of the semicircle formed right and left of the maids of honour and Court officials, kept silence. While looking at the two famous Reformers, she was trying to penetrate them with her fine, intelligent, black eyes, and study them thoroughly.

'One might be the sheath and the other the blade,' Albert de Gondi said in her ear.

'Well, gentlemen,' said Catherine, who could not help smiling, 'has your master given you liberty to arrange a public conference where you may convert to the Word of God those modern Fathers of the Church who are the glory of our realm?'

'We have no master but the Lord,' said Chaudieu.

'Well, you acknowledge some authority in the King of France?' said Catherine, smiling, and interrupting the minister.

'And a great deal in the Queen,' added de Bèze, bowing low.

'You will see,' she went on, 'that the heretics will be my most dutiful subjects.'

'Oh, Madam!' cried Coligny, 'what a splendid kingdom we will make for you! Europe reaps great profit from our divisions. It has seen one half of France set against the other for fifty years past.'

'Have we come here to hear chants in praise of heretics?' said the Connétable roughly.

'No, but to bring them to amendment,' answered the Cardinal de Lorraine in a whisper, 'and we hope to achieve it by a little gentleness.'

'Do you know what I should have done in the reign of the King's father?' said Anne de Montmorency. 'I should have sent for the Provost to hang those two rascals high and dry on the Louvre gallows.'

'Well, gentlemen, and who are the learned doctors you will bring into the field?' said the Queen, silencing the Constable with a look.

'Duplessis-Mornay and Théodore de Bèze are our leaders,' said Chaudieu.

'The Court will probably go to the château of Saint-Germain; and as it would not be seemly that this colloquy should take place in the same town, it shall be held in the little town of Poissy,' replied Catherine.

'Shall we be safe there, Madam?' asked Chaudieu.

'Oh!' said the Queen, with a sort of simplicity, 'you will, no doubt, know what precautions to take. Monsieur the Admiral will make arrangements to that effect with my cousins de Guise and Montmorency.'

'Fie on it all!' said the Constable; 'I will have no part in it.'

The Queen took Chaudieu a little away apart.

'What do you do to your sectarians to give them such a spirit?' said she. 'My furrier's son was really sublime.'

'We have faith,' said Chaudieu.

At this moment the room was filled with eager groups, all discussing the question of this assembly, which, from the Queen's suggestion, was already spoken

of as the 'Convocation of Poissy.' Catherine looked at Chaudieu, and felt it safe to say—

'Yes, a new faith.

'Ah, Madam, if you were not blinded by your connection with the Court of Rome, you would see that we are returning to the true doctrine of Jesus Christ, who, while sanctifying the equality of souls, has given all men on earth equal rights.'

'And do you think yourself the equal of Calvin?' said Catherine shrewdly. 'Nay, nay, we are equals only in church. What, really? Break all bonds between the people and the throne?' cried Catherine. 'You are not merely heretics; you rebel against obedience to the King while avoiding all obedience to the Pope.'

She sharply turned away, and returned to Théodore de Bèze.

'I trust to you, Monsieur,' she said, 'to carry through this conference conscientiously. Take time over it.'

'I fancied,' said Chaudieu to the Prince de Condé, the King of Navarre, and Admiral Coligny, 'that affairs of State were taken more seriously.'

'Oh, we all know exactly what we mean,' said the Prince de Condé, with a significant glance at Théodore de Bèze.

The hunchback took leave of his followers to keep an assignation. This great Prince and party leader was one of the most successful gallants of the Court; the two handsomest women of the day fought for him with such infatuation, that the Maréchale de Saint-André, the wife of one of the coming Triumvirate, gave him her fine estate at Saint-Valery to win him from the Duchesse de Guise, the wife of the man who had wanted to bring his head under the axe; being unable to wean the Duc de Nemours from his flirtations with Mademoiselle de Rohan, she fell in love, meanwhile, with the leader of the Reformed party.

'How different from Geneva!' said Chaudieu to Théodore de Bèze on the little bridge by the Louvre.

'They are livelier here, and I cannot imagine why they are such traitors,' replied de Bèze.

'Meet a traitor with a traitor-and-a-half,' said Chaudieu in a whisper. 'I have saints in Paris that I can rely on, and I mean to make a prophet of Calvin. Christophe will rid us of the most dangerous of our enemies.'

'The Queen-mother, for whom the poor wretch endured torture, has already had him passed, by high-handed orders, as pleader before the Parlement, and lawyers are more apt to be tell-tales than assassins. Remember Avenelles, who sold the secret of our first attempt to take up arms.'

'But I know Christophe,' said Chaudieu, with an air of conviction,' as he and the Calvinist ambassador parted.

Some days after the reception of Calvin's secret envoys by Catherine, and towards the end of that year—for the year then began at Easter, and the modern calendar was not adopted till this very reign—Christophe, still stretched on an armchair, was sitting on that side of the large sombre room where our story began, in such a position as to look out on the river. His feet rested on a stool. Mademoiselle Lecamus and Babette Lallier had just renewed the application of compresses, soaked in a lotion brought by Ambroise, to whose care Catherine had commended Christophe. When once he was restored to his family, the lad had become the object of the most devoted care. Babette, with her father's permission, came to the house every morning, and did not leave till the evening. Christophe, a subject of wonder to the apprentices, gave rise in the neighbourhood to endless tales, which involved him in poetic mystery. He had been put to torture, and the famous Ambroise Paré was exerting all his skill to save him.

What, then, had he done to be treated so? On this point neither Christophe nor his father breathed a word. Catherine, now all-powerful, had an interest in keeping silence, and so had the Prince de Condé. The visits of Ambroise Paré, the surgeon to the King and to the House of Guise, permitted by the Queen-mother and the Princes of Lorraine to attend a youth accused of heresy, added to the singularity of this business, which no one could see through. And then the priest of Saint-Pierre aux Bœufs came several times to see his churchwarden's son, and these visits made the causes of Christophe's condition even more inexplicable.

The old furrier, who had a plan of his own, replied evasively when his fellows of the guild, traders, and friends spoke of his son—

'I am very happy, neighbour, to have been able to save him! You know! it is well not to put your finger between the wood and the bark. My son put his hand to the stake and took out fire enough to burn my house down!—They imposed on his youth, and we citizens never get anything but scorn and harm by hanging on to the great. This quite determines me to make a lawyer of my boy; the law courts will teach him to weigh his words and deeds. The young Queen, who is now in Scotland, had a great deal to do with it; but perhaps Christophe was very imprudent too. I went through terrible grief.—All this will probably lead to my retiring from business; I will never go to Court any more. My son has had enough of the Reformation now; it has left him with broken arms and legs. But for Ambroise, where should I be?'

Thanks to these speeches and to his prudence, a report was spread in the neighbourhood that Christophe no longer followed the creed of Colas. Every one thought it quite natural that the old Syndic should wish to see his son a lawyer in the Parlement, and thus the priest's calls seemed quite a matter of course. In thinking of

the old man's woes, no one thought of his ambition, which would have been deemed monstrous.

The young lawyer, who had spent ninety days on the bed put up for him in the old sitting-room, had only been out of it for a week past, and still needed the help of crutches to enable him to walk. Babette's affection and his mother's tenderness had touched Christophe deeply; still, having him in bed, the two women lectured him soundly on the subject of religion. Président de Thou came to see his godson, and was most paternal. Christophe, as a pleader in the Parlement, ought to be a Catholic, he would be pledged to it by his oath; and the President, who never seemed to doubt the young man's orthodoxy, added these important words—

'You have been cruelly tested, my boy. I myself know nothing of the reasons Messieurs de Guise had for treating you thus; but now I exhort you to live quietly henceforth, and not to interfere in broils, for the favour of the King and Queen will not be shown to such as brew storms. You are not a great enough man to drive a bargain with the King, like the Duke and the Cardinal. If you want to be councillor in the Parlement some day, you can only attain that high office by serious devotion to the cause of Royalty.'

However, neither Monsieur de Thou's visit, nor Babette's charms, nor the entreaties of Mademoiselle Lecamus his mother, had shaken the faith of the Protestant martyr. Christophe clung all the more stoutly to his religion in proportion to what he had suffered for it.

'My father will never allow me to marry a heretic,' said Babette in his ear.

Christophe replied only with tears, which left the pretty girl speechless and thoughtful.

Old Lecamus maintained his dignity as a father and a Syndic, watched his son, and said little. The old man, having got back his dear Christophe, was almost vexed

with himself, and repentant of having displayed all his affection for his only son; but secretly he admired him. At no time in his life had the furrier pulled so many wires to gain his ends; for he could see the ripe harvest of the crop sown with so much toil, and wished to gather it all.

A few days since he had had a long conversation with Christophe alone, hoping to discover the secret of his son's tenacity. Christophe, who was not devoid of ambition, believed in the Prince de Condé. The Prince's generous speech—which was no more than the stock-in-trade of princes—was stamped on his heart. He did not know that Condé had wished him at the devil at the moment when he bid him such a touching farewell through the bars of his prison at Orleans.

'A Gascon would have understood,' the Prince had said to himself.

And in spite of his admiration for the Prince, Christophe cherished the deepest respect for Catherine, the great Queen who had explained to him in a look that she was compelled by necessity to sacrifice him, and then, during his torture, had conveyed to him in another glance an unlimited promise by an almost imperceptible tear.

During the deep calm of the ninety days and nights he had spent in recovering, the newly-made lawyer thought over the events at Blois and at Orleans. He weighed, in spite of himself, it may be said, the influence of these two patrons; he hesitated between the Queen aud the Prince. He had certainly done more for Catherine than for the Reformation; and the young man's heart and mind, of course, went forth to the Queen, less by reason of this difference than because she was a woman. In such a case a man will always found his hopes on a woman rather than on a man.

'I immolated myself for her—what will she not do for me?'

This was the question he almost involuntarily asked himself as he recalled the tone in which she had said, 'My poor boy!'

It is difficult to conceive of the pitch of self-consciousness reached by a man alone and sick in bed. Everything, even the care of which he is the object, tends to make him think of himself alone. By exaggerating the Prince de Condé's obligations to him, Christophe looked forward to obtaining some post at the Court of Navarre. The lad, a novice still in politics, was all the more forgetful of the anxieties which absorb party leaders, and of the swift rush of men and events which overrule them, because he lived almost in solitary imprisonment in that dark parlour. Every party is bound to be ungrateful when it is fighting for dear life; and when it has won the day, there are so many persons to be rewarded, that it is ungrateful still. The rank and file submit to this oblivion, but the captains turn against the new master who for so long has marched as their equal.

Christophe, the only person to remember what he had suffered, already reckoned himself as one of the chiefs of the Reformation by considering himself as one of its martyrs. Lecamus, the old wolf of trade, acute and clear-sighted, had guessed his son's secret thoughts; indeed, all his manœuvring was based on the very natural hesitancy that possessed the lad.

'Would not it be fine,' he had said the day before to Babette, 'to be the wife of a Councillor to the Parlement; you would be addressed as Madame.'

'You are crazy, neighbour,' said Lallier. 'In the first place, where would you find ten thousand crowns a year in landed estate, which a Councillor must show, and from whom could you purchase a connection? The Queen-mother and Regent would have to give all her mind to it to get your son into the Parlement; and he smells of the stake too strongly to be admitted.'

'What would you give, now, to see your daughter a Councillor's wife?'

'You want to sound the depth of my purse, you old fox!' exclaimed Lallier.

Councillor to the Parlement! The words distracted Christophe's brain.

Long after the conference was over, one morning when Christophe sat gazing at the river, which reminded him of the scene that was the beginning of all this story, of the Prince de Condé, la Renaudie, and Chaudieu, of his journey to Blois, and of all he hoped for, the Syndic came to sit down by his son with ill-disguised glee under an affectation of solemnity.

'My boy,' said he, 'after what took place between you and the heads of the riot at Amboise, they owed you so much that your future might very well be cared for by the House of Navarre.'

'Yes,' replied Christophe.

'Well,' his father went on, 'I have definitely applied for permission for you to purchase a legal business in Béarn. Our good friend Paré undertook to transmit the letters I wrote in your name to the Prince de Condé and Queen Jeanne.—Here, read this reply from Monsieur de Pibrac, Vice-Chancellor of Navarre:—

'*To Master Lecamus, Syndic of the Guild of Furriers.*

'His Highness the Prince de Condé bids me express to you his regret at being unable to do anything for his fellow-prisoner in the Tour de Saint-Aignan, whom he remembers well, and to whom, for the present, he offers the place of man-at-arms in his own company, where he will have the opportunity of making his way as a man of good heart—which he is.

'The Queen of Navarre hopes for an occasion of rewarding Master Christophe, and will not fail.

'And with this, Monsieur le Syndic, I pray God have you in His keeping. PIBRAC,

'*Chancellor of Navarre.*

'Nérac.'

'Nérac! Pibrac! Crac!' cried Babette. 'There is nothing to be got out of these Gascons; they think only of themselves.'

Old Lecamus was looking at his son with ironical amusement.

'And he wants to set a poor boy on horseback whose knees and ankles were pounded up for him!' cried the mother. 'What a shameful mockery!'

'I do not seem to see you as a Councillor in Navarre,' said the old furrier.

'I should like to know what Queen Catherine would do for me if I petitioned her,' said Christophe, much crestfallen.

'She made no promises,' said the old merchant, 'but I am sure she would not make a fool of you, and would remember your sufferings. Still, how could she make a councillor-at-law of a Protestant citizen?'

'But Christophe has never abjured!' exclaimed Babette. 'He may surely keep his own secret as to his religious opinions.'

'The Prince de Condé would be less scornful of a Councillor to the Parlement of Paris,' said Lecamus.

'A Councillor, father! Is it possible?'

'Yes, if you do nothing to upset what I am managing for you. My neighbour Lallier here is ready to pay two hundred thousand livres, if I add as much again, for the purchase of a fine estate entailed on the heirs male, which we will hand over to you.'

'And I will add something more for a house in Paris,' said Lallier.

'Well, Christophe?' said Babette.

'You are talking without the Queen,' replied the young lawyer.

Some days after this bitter mortification, an apprentice brought this brief note to Christophe—

'Chaudieu wishes to see his son.'

'Bring him in,' said Christophe.

'O my saint and martyr!' cried the preacher, embracing the young man, 'have you got over your sufferings?'

'Yes, thanks to Paré!'

'Thanks to God, who gave you strength to endure them! But what is this I hear? You have passed as a pleader, you have taken the oath of fidelity, you have confessed the Whore, the Catholic, Apostolic, Romish Church?'

'My father insisted.'

'But are we not to leave father and mother and children and wife for the sacred cause of Calvinism, and to suffer all things?—Oh, Christophe, Calvin, the great Calvin, the whole party, the whole world, the future counts on your courage and your greatness of soul! We want your life.'

There is this strange feature in the mind of man: the most devoted, even in the act of devoting himself, always builds up a romance of hope even in the most perilous crisis. Thus, when on the river under the Pont au Change, the prince, the soldier, and the preacher had required Christophe to carry to Queen Catherine the document which, if discovered, would have cost him his life, the boy had trusted to his wit, to chance, to his perspicacity, and had boldly marched on between the two formidable parties—the Guises and the Queen—who had so nearly crushed him. While in the torture-chamber he still had said to himself, 'I shall live through it—it is only pain!'

But at this brutal command, 'Die!' to a man who was still helpless, hardly recovered from the injuries he

had suffered, and who clung all the more to life for having seen death so near, it was impossible to indulge in any such illusions.

Christophe calmly asked, 'What do you want of me?'

'To fire a pistol bravely, as Stewart fired at Minard.'

'At whom?'

'The Duc de Guise.'

'Assassination?'

'Revenge!—Have you forgotten the hundred gentlemen massacred on one scaffold! A child, little d'Aubigné, said as he saw the butchery, 'They have beheaded all France.'

'We are to take blows and not to return them, is the teaching of the Gospel,' replied Christophe. 'If we are to imitate the Catholics, of what use is it to reform the Church?'

'Oh, Christophe, they have made a lawyer of you, and you argue!' said Chaudieu.

'No, my friend,' the youth replied. 'But principles are ungrateful, and you and yours will only be the playthings of the House of Bourbon.'

'Oh, Christophe, if you had only heard Calvin, you would know that we can turn them like a glove! The Bourbons are the glove, and we the hand.'

'Read this,' said Christophe, handing Pibrac's letter to the minister.

'Alas, boy! you are ambitious; you can no longer sacrifice yourself'; and Chaudieu went away.

Not long after this visit, Christophe, with the families of Lallier and Lecamus, had met to celebrate the plighting of Babette and Christophe in the old parlour, whence Christophe's couch was now removed, for he could climb the stairs now, and was beginning to drag himself about without crutches. It was nine in the evening, and they waited for Ambroise Paré. The family notary was

sitting at a table covered with papers. The furrier was selling his house and business to his head-clerk, who was to pay forty thousand livres down for the house, and to mortgage it as security for the stock-in-trade, besides paying twenty thousand livres on account.

Lecamus had purchased for his son a magnificent house in the Rue de Saint-Pierre aux Bœufs, built of stone by Philibert de l'Orme, as a wedding gift. The Syndic had also spent two hundred and fifty thousand livres out of his fortune, Lallier paying an equal sum, for the acquisition of a fine manor and estate in Picardy, for which five hundred thousand livres were asked. This estate being a dependence of the Crown, letters patent from the King—called letters of rescript—were necessary, besides the payment of considerable fines and fees. Thus the actual marriage was to be postponed till the royal signature could be obtained.

Though the citizens of Paris had obtained the right of purchasing manors and lands, the prudence of the Privy Council had placed certain restrictions on the transfer of lands belonging to the Crown; and the estate on which Lecamus had had his eye for the last ten years was one of these. Ambroise had undertaken to produce the necessary permission this very evening. Old Lecamus went to and fro between the sitting-room and the front door with an impatience that showed the eagerness of his ambition.

At last Ambroise appeared.

'My good friend!' exclaimed the surgeon in a great fuss, and looking at the supper-table, 'what is your napery like?—Very good.—Now bring waxlights, and make haste, make haste. Bring out the best of everything you have.'

'What is the matter?' asked the priest of Saint-Pierre aux Bœufs.

'The Queen-mother and the King are coming to sup with you,' replied the surgeon. 'The Queen and King

expect to meet here an old Councillor, whose business is to be sold to Christophe, and Monsieur de Thou, who has managed the bargain. Do not look as if you expected them; I stole out of the Louvre.'

In an instant all were astir. Christophe's mother and Babette's aunt trotted about in all the flurry of housewives taken by surprise. In spite of the confusion into which the announcement had thrown the party, preparations were made with miraculous energy. Christophe, amazed, astounded, overpowered by such condescension, stood speechless, looking on at all the bustle.

'The Queen and the King here!' said the old mother.

'The Queen?' echoed Babette; 'but what for, what to do?'

Within an hour everything was altered; the old room was smartened up, the table shone. A sound of horses was heard in the street. The gleam of torches carried by the mounted escort brought all the neighbours' noses to the windows. The rush was soon over; no one was left under the arcade but the Queen-mother and her son, King Charles IX., Charles de Gondi, Master of the Wardrobe, and tutor to the King; Monsieur de Thou, the retiring Councillor; Pinard, Secretary of State, and two pages.

'Good folks,' said the Queen as she went in, 'the King, my son, and I have come to sign the marriage-contract of our furrier's son, but on condition that he remains a Catholic. Only a Catholic can serve in the Parlement, only a Catholic can own lands dependent on the Crown, only a Catholic can sit at table with the King—what do you say, Pinard?'

The Secretary of State stepped forward, holding the letters patent.

'If we are not all Catholics here,' said the little King, 'Pinard will throw all the papers into the fire; but we are all Catholics?' he added, looking round proudly enough at the company.

'Yes, Sire,' said Christophe Lecamus, bending the knee, not without difficulty, and kissing the hand the young King held out to him.

Queen Catherine, who also held out her hand to Christophe, pulled him up rather roughly, and leading him into a corner, said—

'Understand, boy, no subterfuges! We are playing an honest game?'

'Yes, Madam,' he said, dazzled by this splendid reward and by the honour the grateful Queen had done him.

'Well, then, Master Lecamus, the King, my son, and I permit you to purchase the offices and appointments of this good man Groslay, Councillor to the Parlement, who is here?' said the Queen. 'I hope, young man, that you will follow in the footsteps of your Lord President.'

De Thou came forward and said—

'I will answer for him, Madam.'

'Very well, then proceed, notary,' said Pinard.

'Since the King, our master, does us the honour of signing my daughter's marriage-contract,' cried Lallier, 'I will pay the whole price of the estate.'

'The ladies may be seated,' said the young King graciously. 'As a wedding gift to the bride, with my mother's permission, I remit my fines and fees.'

Old Lecamus and Lallier fell on their knees and kissed the boy-King's hand.

'By Heaven, Sire, what loads of money these citizens have!' said Gondi in his ear.

And the young King laughed.

'Their Majesties being so graciously inclined,' said old Lecamus, 'will they allow me to present to them my successor in the business, and grant him the royal patent as furrier to their Majesties?'

'Let us see him,' said the King, and Lecamus brought forward his successor, who was white with alarm.

Old Lecamus was shrewd enough to offer the young

King a silver cup which he had bought from Benvenuto Cellini when he was staying in Paris at the Tour de Nesle, at a cost of not less than two thousand crowns.

'Oh, mother! what a fine piece of work!' cried the youth, lifting the cup by its foot.

'It is Florentine,' said Catherine.

'Pardon me, Madam,' said Lecamus; 'it was made in France, though by a Florentine. If it had come from Florence, it should have been the Queen's; but being made in France, it is the King's.'

'I accept it, my friend,' cried Charles IX., 'and henceforth I drink out of it.'

'It is good enough,' the Queen remarked, 'to be included among the Crown treasure.'

'And you, Master Ambroise,' she went on in an undertone, turning to the surgeon, and pointing to Christophe, 'have you cured him? Will he walk?'

'He will fly,' said the surgeon, with a smile. 'You have stolen him from us very cleverly!'

'The abbey will not starve for lack of one monk!' replied the Queen, in the frivolous tone for which she has been blamed, but which lay only on the surface.

The supper was cheerful; the Queen thought Babette pretty, and, like the great lady she was, she slipped a diamond ring on the girl's finger in compensation for the value of the silver cup.

King Charles IX., who afterwards was perhaps rather too fond of thus invading his subjects' homes, supped with a good appetite; then, on a word from his new tutor, who had been instructed, it is said, to efface the virtuous teaching of Cypierre, he incited the President of Parlement, the old retired councillor, the Secretary of State, the priest, the notary, and the citizens to drink so deep, that Queen Catherine rose to go at the moment when she saw that their high spirits were becoming uproarious.

As the Queen rose, Christophe, his father, and the

two women took up tapers to light her as far as the door of the shop. Then Christophe made so bold as to pull the Queen's wide sleeve and give her a meaning look. Catherine stopped, dismissed the old man and the women with a wave of her hand, and said to the young man—'What?'

'If you can make any use of the information, Madam,' said he, speaking close to the Queen's ear, 'I can tell you that assassins are plotting against the Duc de Guise's life.'

'You are a loyal subject,' said Catherine with a smile, 'and I will never forget you.'

She held out her hand, famous for its beauty, drawing off her glove as a mark of special favour. And Christophe, as he kissed that exquisite hand, was more Royalist than ever.

'Then I shall be rid of that wretch without my having anything to do with it,' was her reflection as she put on her glove.

She mounted her mule and returned to the Louvre with her two pages.

Christophe drank, but he was gloomy; Paré's austere face reproached him for his apostasy; however, later events justified the old Syndic. Christophe would certainly never have escaped in the massacre of Saint-Bartholomew; his wealth and lands would have attracted the butchers. History has recorded the cruel fate of the wife of Lallier's successor, a beautiful woman, whose naked body remained hanging by the hair for three days to one of the starlings of the Pont au Change. Babette could shudder then as she reflected that such a fate might have been hers if Christophe had remained a Calvinist, as the Reformers were soon generally called. Calvin's ambition was fulfilled, but not till after his death.

This was the origin of the famous Lecamus family of lawyers. Tallemant des Réaux was mistaken in saying

You are a loyal subject,' said Catherine
Drawn and Etched by D. Murray Smith

they had come from Picardy. It was afterwards to the interest of the Lecamus family to refer their beginnings to the time when they had acquired their principal estate, situated in that province.

Christophe's son, and his successor under Louis XIII., was father of that rich Président Lecamus, who in Louis XIV.'s time built the magnificent mansion which divided with the Hôtel Lambert the admiration of Parisians and foreigners, and which is certainly one of the finest buildings in Paris. This house still exists in the Rue de Thorigny, though it was pillaged at the beginning of the Revolution, as belonging to Monsieur de Juigné, Archbishop of Paris. All the paintings were then defaced, and the lodgers who have since dwelt there have still further damaged it. This fine residence, earned in the old house in the Rue de la Pelleterie, still shows what splendid results were then the outcome of family spirit. We may be allowed to doubt whether modern individualism, resulting from the repeated equal division of property, will ever raise such edifices.

PART II

THE RUGGIERI'S SECRET

Between eleven o'clock and midnight, towards the end of October 1573, two Florentines, brothers, Albert de Gondi, Marshal of France, and Charles de Gondi la Tour, Master of the Wardrobe to King Charles IX., were sitting at the top of a house in the Rue Saint-Honoré on the edge of the gutter. Such gutters were made of stone; they ran along below the roof to catch the rain-water, and were pierced here and there with long gargoyles carved in the form of grotesque creatures with gaping jaws. In spite of the zeal of the present generation in the destruction of ancient houses, there were still in Paris many such gutter-spouts when, not long since, the police regulations as to waste-pipes led to their disappearance. A few sculptured gutters are still to be seen in the Saint-Antoine quarter, where the low rents have kept owners from adding rooms in the roof.

It may seem strange that two persons invested with such important functions should have chosen a perch more befitting cats. But to any one who has hunted through the historical curiosities of that time, and seen how many interests were complicated about the throne, so that the domestic politics of France can only be compared to a tangled skein of thread, these two Florentines are really cats, and quite in their place in a gutter. The devotion to the person of Catherine de' Medici, who had transplanted them to the French Court, required

them to shirk none of the consequences of their intrusion there.

But to explain how and why these two courtiers were perched up there, it will be necessary to relate a scene which had just taken place within a stone's throw of this gutter, at the Louvre, in the fine brown room—which is, perhaps, all that remains of Henri II.'s apartments—where the Court was in attendance after supper on the two Queens and the King. At that time middle-class folk supped at six o'clock, and men of rank at seven; but people of exquisite fashion supped between eight and nine; it was the meal we nowadays call dinner.

Some people have supposed that etiquette was the invention of Louis XIV.; but this is a mistake; it was introduced into France by Catherine de' Medici, who was so exacting that the Connétable Anne de Montmorency had more difficulty in obtaining leave to ride into the courtyard of the Louvre than in winning his sword, and even then the permission was granted only on the score of his great age. Etiquette was slightly relaxed under the first three Bourbon Kings, but assumed an Oriental character under Louis the Great, for it was derived from the Lower Empire, which borrowed it from Persia. In 1573 not only had very few persons a right to enter the courtyard of the Louvre with their attendants and torches, just as in Louis XIV.'s time only dukes and peers might drive under the porch, but the functions which gave the privilege of attending their Majesties after supper could easily be counted. The Maréchal de Retz, whom we have just seen keeping watch on the gutter, once offered a thousand crowns of that day to the clerk of the closet to get speech of Henry III. at an hour when he had no right of *entrée*. And how a certain venerable historian mocks at a view of the courtyard of the château of Blois, into which the draughtsman introduced the figure of a man on horseback!

At this hour, then, there were at the Louvre none but

the most eminent persons in the kingdom. Queen Elizabeth of Austria and her mother-in-law, Catherine de' Medici, were seated to the left of the fireplace. In the opposite corner the King, sunk in his armchair, affected an apathy excusable on the score of digestion, for he had eaten like a prince returned from hunting. Possibly, too, he wished to avoid speech in the presence of so many persons whose interest it was to detect his thoughts.

The courtiers stood, hat in hand, at the further end of the room. Some conversed in undertones; others kept an eye on the King, hoping for a glance or a word. One, being addressed by the Queen-mother, conversed with her for a few minutes. Another would be so bold as to speak a word to Charles IX., who replied with a nod or a short answer. A German noble, the Count of Solern, was standing in the chimney corner by the side of Charles V.'s grand-daughter, with whom he had come to France. Near the young Queen, seated on a stool, was her lady-in-waiting, the Countess Fieschi, a Strozzi, and related to Catherine. The beautiful Madame de Sauves, a descendant of Jacques Cœur, and mistress in succession of the King of Navarre, of the King of Poland, and of the Duc d'Alençon, had been invited to supper, but she remained standing, her husband being merely a Secretary of State. Behind these two ladies were the two Gondis, talking to them. They alone were laughing of all the dull assembly. Gondi, made Duc de Retz and Gentleman of the Bedchamber, since obtaining the Marshal's bâton though he had never commanded an army, had been sent as the King's proxy to be married to the Queen at Spires. This honour plainly indicated that he, like his brother, was one of the few persons whom the King and Queen admitted to a certain familiarity.

On the King's side the most conspicuous figure was the Maréchal de Tavannes, who was at Court on business;

Neufville de Villeroy, one of the shrewdest negotiators of the time, who laid the foundation of the fortunes of his family; Messieurs de Birague and de Chiverni, one in attendance on the Queen-mother, the other Chancellor of Anjou and of Poland, who, knowing Catherine's favouritism, had attached himself to Henry III., the brother whom Charles IX. regarded as an enemy; Strozzi, a cousin of Queen Catherine's, and a few more gentlemen, among whom were to be noted the old Cardinal de Lorraine, and his nephew, the young Duc de Guise, both very much kept at a distance by Catherine and by the King. These two chiefs of the Holy Alliance, afterwards known as the League, established some years since with Spain, made a display of the submission of servants who await their opportunity to become the masters; Catherine and Charles IX. were watching each other with mutual attention.

At this Court—as gloomy as the room in which it had assembled—each one had reasons for sadness or absence of mind. The young Queen was enduring all the torments of jealousy, and disguised them ineffectually by attempting to smile at her husband, whom she adored as a pious woman of infinite kindness. Marie Touchet, Charles IX.'s only mistress, to whom he was chivalrously faithful, had come home a month since from the château of Fayet, in Dauphiné, whither she had retired for the birth of her child; and she had brought back with her the only son Charles IX. ever had—Charles, at first Comte d'Auvergne, and afterwards Duc d'Angoulême.

Besides the grief of seeing her rival the mother of the King's son, while she had only a daughter, the poor Queen was enduring the mortification of complete desertion. During his mistress's absence, the King had made it up with his wife with a vehemence which history mentions as one of the causes of his death. Thus Marie Touchet's return made the pious Austrian princess understand how little her husband's heart had

been concerned in his love-making. Nor was this the only disappointment the young Queen had to endure in this matter; till now Catherine de' Medici had seemed to be her friend; but, in fact, her mother-in-law, for political ends, had encouraged her son's infidelity, and preferred to support the mistress rather than the wife. And this is the reason why.

When Charles IX. first confessed his passion for Marie Touchet, Catherine looked with favour on the girl for reasons affecting her own prospects of dominion. Marie Touchet was brought to Court at a very early age, at the time of life when a girl's best feelings are in their bloom; she loved the King passionately for his own sake. Terrified at the gulf into which ambition had overthrown the Duchesse de Valentinois, better known as Diane de Poitiers, she was afraid too, no doubt, of Queen Catherine, and preferred happiness to splendour. She thought perhaps that a pair of lovers so young as she and the King were could not hold their own against the Queen-mother.

And, indeed, Marie, the only child of Jean Touchet, the lord of Beauvais and le Quillard, King's Councillor, and Lieutenant of the Bailiwick of Orleans, halfway between the citizen class and the lowest nobility, was neither altogether a noble nor altogether *bourgeoise*, and was probably ignorant of the objects of innate ambition aimed at by the Pisseleus and the Saint-Valliers, women of family who were struggling for their families with the secret weapons of love. Marie Touchet, alone, and of no rank, spared Catherine de' Medici the annoyance of finding in her son's mistress the daughter of some great house who might have set up for her rival.

Jean Touchet, a wit in his day, to whom some poets dedicated their works, wanted nothing of the Court. Marie, a young creature, with no following, as clever and well informed as she was simple and artless, suited the Queen-mother to admiration, and won her warm affection.

In point of fact, Catherine persuaded the Parlement to acknowledge the son which Marie Touchet bore to the King in the month of April, and she granted him the title of Comte d'Auvergne, promising the King that she would leave the boy her personal estate, the *Comtés* of Auvergne and Lauraguais. Afterwards, Marguerite, Queen of Navarre, disputed the gift when she became Queen of France, and annulled it; but later still, Louis XIII., out of respect to the Royal blood of the Valois, indemnified the Comte d'Auvergne by making him Duc d'Angoulême.

Catherine had already given Marie Touchet, who asked for nothing, the manor of Belleville, an estate without a title, near Vincennes, whither she came when, after hunting, the King slept at that Royal residence. Charles IX. spent the greater part of his later days in that gloomy fortress, and, according to some authors, ended his days there as Louis XII. had ended his. Though it was very natural that a lover so entirely captivated should lavish on the woman he adored fresh proofs of affection when he had to expiate his legitimate infidelities, Catherine, after driving her son back to his wife's arms, certainly pleaded for Marie Touchet as women can, and had won the King back to his mistress again. Whatever could keep Charles IX. employed in anything but politics was pleasing to Catherine; and the kind intentions she expressed towards this child for the moment deceived Charles IX., who was beginning to regard her as his enemy.

The motives on which Catherine acted in this business escaped the discernment of the Queen, who, according to Brantôme, was one of the gentlest Queens that ever reigned, and who did no harm nor displeasure to any one, even reading her Hours in secret. But this innocent Princess began to perceive what gulfs yawn round a throne, a terrible discovery which might well make her feel giddy; and some still worse feeling must have

inspired her reply to one of her ladies, who, at the King's death, observed to her that if she had had a son, she would be Queen-mother and Regent—

'Ah, God be praised that He never gave me a son! What would have come of it? The poor child would have been robbed, as they tried to rob the King my husband, and I should have been the cause of it.—God has had mercy on the kingdom, and has ordered everything for the best.'

This Princess, of whom Brantôme thinks he has given an ample description when he had said that she had a complexion of face as fine and delicate as that of the ladies of her Court, and very pleasing, and that she had a beautiful shape though but of middle height, was held of small account at the Court; and the King's state affording her an excuse for her double grief, her demeanour added to the gloomy hues of a picture to which a young Queen less cruelly stricken than she was might have given some brightness. The pious Elizabeth was at this crisis a proof of the fact that qualities which add lustre to a woman in ordinary life may be fatal in a Queen. A Princess who did not devote her whole night to prayer would have been a valuable ally for Charles IX., who found no help either in his wife or in his mistress.

As to the Queen-mother, she was absorbed in watching the King; he during supper had made a display of high spirits, which she interpreted as assumed to cloak some plan against herself. Such sudden cheerfulness was in too strong a contrast to the fractious humour he had betrayed by his persistency in hunting, and by a frenzy of toil at his forge, where he wrought iron, for Catherine to be duped by it. Though she could not guess what statesman was lending himself to these schemes and plots —for Charles IX. could put his mother's spies off the scent—Catherine had no doubt that some plan against her was in the wind.

The unexpected appearance of Tavannes, arriving at

the same time as Strozzi, whom she had summoned, had greatly aroused her suspicions. By her power of organisation Catherine was superior to the evolution of circumstances; but against sudden violence she was powerless.

As many persons know nothing of the state of affairs, complicated by the multiplicity of parties which then racked France, each leader having his own interests in view, it is needful to devote a few words to describing the dangerous crisis in which the Queen-mother had become entangled. And as this will show Catherine de' Medici in a new light, it will carry us to the very core of this narrative.

Two words will fully summarise this strange woman, so interesting to study, whose influence left such deep traces on France. These two words are dominion and astrology. Catherine de' Medici was excessively ambitious; she had no passion but for power. Superstitious and fatalist, as many a man of superior mind has been, her only sincere belief was in the occult sciences. Without this twofold light, she must always remain misunderstood; and by giving the first place to her faith in astrology, a light will be thrown on the two philosophical figures of this Study.

There was a man whom Catherine clung to more than to her children; this man was Cosmo Ruggieri. She gave him rooms in her Hôtel de Soissons; she had made him her chief counsellor, instructing him to tell her if the stars ratified the advice and common-sense of her ordinary advisers.

Certain curious antecedent facts justified the power which Ruggieri exerted over his mistress till her latest breath. One of the most learned men of the sixteenth century was beyond doubt the physician to Catherine's father, Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino. This leech was known as Ruggiero the elder (*vecchio Ruggier*, and in French *Roger l'Ancien*, with authors who have

written concerning alchemy), to distinguish him from his two sons, Lorenzo Ruggiero, called the Great by writers on the Cabala, and Cosmo Ruggiero, Catherine's astrologer, also known as *Roger* by various French historians. French custom altered their name to Ruggieri, as it did Catherine's from Medici to Medicis.

The elder Ruggieri, then, was so highly esteemed by the family of the Medici that the two Dukes, Cosmo and Lorenzo, were godfathers to his sons. In his capacity of mathematician, astrologer, and physician to the Ducal House—three offices that were often scarcely distinguished — he cast the horoscope of Catherine's nativity, in concert with Bazile, the famous mathematician. At that period the occult sciences were cultivated with an eagerness which may seem surprising to the sceptical spirits of this supremely analytical age, who perhaps may find in this historical sketch the germ of the positive sciences which flourish in the nineteenth century—bereft, however, of the poetic grandeur brought to them by the daring speculators of the sixteenth; for they, instead of applying themselves to industry, exalted art and vivified thought. The protection universally granted to these sciences by the sovereigns of the period was indeed justified by the admirable works of inventors who, starting from the search for the *magnum opus*, arrived at astonishing results.

Never, in fact, were rulers more curious for these mysteries. The Fugger family, in whom every modern Lucullus must recognise his chiefs, and every banker his masters, were beyond a doubt men of business, not to be caught nodding; well, these practical men, while lending the capitalised wealth of Europe to the sovereigns of the sixteenth century—who ran into debt quite as handsomely as those of to-day—these illustrious entertainers of Charles v. furnished funds for the retorts of Paracelsus. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Ruggieri the elder was the head of that

secret college whence came Cardan, Nostradamus, and Agrippa, each in turn physician to the Valois; and all the astronomers, astrologers, and alchemists who at that period crowded to the Courts of the Princes of Christendom, and who found especial welcome and protection in France from Catherine de' Medici.

In the horoscope cast for Catherine by Bazile and Ruggieri the elder, the principal events of her life were predicted with an accuracy that is enough to drive disbelievers to despair. This forecast announced the disasters which, during the siege of Florence, affected her early life, her marriage with a Prince of France, his unexpected accession to the throne, the birth and the number of her children. Three of her sons were to reign in succession, her two daughters were to become queens; all were to die childless. And this was all so exactly verified, that many historians have regarded it as a prophecy after the event.

It is well known that Nostradamus brought to the château of Chaumont, whither Catherine went at the time of la Renaudie's conspiracy, a woman who had the gift of reading the future. Now in the time of Francis II., when the Queen's sons were still children and in good health, before Elizabeth de Valois had married Philip II. of Spain, or Marguerite de Valois had married Henri de Bourbon, King of Navarre, Nostradamus and this soothsayer confirmed all the details of the famous horoscope.

This woman, gifted no doubt with second sight, and one of the extensive association of indefatigable inquirers for the *magnum opus*, though her life has evaded the ken of history, foretold that the last of these children to wear the crown would perish assassinated. Having placed the Queen in front of a magical mirror in which a spinning-wheel was reflected, each child's face appearing at the end of a spoke, the soothsayer made the wheel turn, and the Queen counted the number of turns.

Each turn was a year of a reign. When Henri IV. was placed on the wheel, it went round twenty-two times. The woman—some say it was a man—told the terrified Queen that Henri de Bourbon would certainly be King of France, and reign so many years. Queen Catherine vowed a mortal hatred of the Béarnais on hearing that he would succeed the last, murdered Valois.

Curious to know what sort of death she herself would die, she was warned to beware of Saint-Germain. Thenceforth, thinking that she would be imprisoned or violently killed at the château of Saint-Germain, she never set foot in it, though, by its nearness to Paris, it was infinitely better situated for her plans than those where she took refuge with the King in troubled times. When she fell ill, a few days after the Duc de Guise was assassinated, during the assembly of the States-General at Blois, she asked the name of the prelate who came to minister to her. She was told that his name was Saint-Germain.

'I am a dead woman!' she cried.

She died the next day, having lived just the number of years allotted to her by every reading of her horoscope.

This scene, known to the Cardinal de Lorraine, who ascribed it to the Black Art, was being realised; Francis II. had reigned for two turns only of the wheel, and Charles IX. was achieving his last. When Catherine spoke these strange words to her son Henri as he set out for Poland, 'You will soon return!' they must be ascribed to her faith in the occult sciences, and not to any intention of poisoning Charles IX. Marguerite de France was now Queen of Navarre; Elizabeth was Queen of Spain; the Duc d'Anjou was King of Poland.

Many other circumstances contributed to confirm Catherine's belief in the occult sciences. On the eve of the tournament where Henri II. was mortally wounded, Catherine saw the fatal thrust in a dream. Her astro-

logical council, consisting of Nostradamus and the two Ruggieri, had foretold the King's death. History has recorded Catherine's earnest entreaties that he should not enter the lists. The prognostic, and the dream begotten of the prognostic, were verified.

The chronicles of the time relate another and not less strange fact. The courier who brought news of the victory of Moncontour arrived at night, having ridden so hard that he had killed three horses. The Queen-mother was roused, and said, 'I knew it.'

'In fact,' says Brantôme, 'she had the day before announced her son's success and some details of the fight.'

The astrologer attached to the House of Bourbon foretold that the youngest of the Princes in direct descent from Saint-Louis, the son of Antoine de Bourbon, would be King of France. This prophecy, noted by Sully, was fulfilled precisely as described by the horoscope, which made Henri IV. remark that by dint of lies these astrologers hit on the truth.

Be this as it may, most of the clever men of the time believed in the far-reaching 'science of the Magi,' as it was called by the masters of astrology—or sorcery, as it was termed by the people—and they were justified by the verification of horoscopes.

It was for Cosmo Ruggieri, her mathematician and astrologer—her wizard, if you will—that Catherine erected the pillar against the corn-market in Paris, the only remaining relic of the Hôtel de Soissons. Cosmo Ruggieri, like confessors, had a mysterious influence which satisfied him, as it does them. His secret ambition, too, was superior to that of vulgar minds. This man, depicted by romance-writers and playwrights as a mere juggler, held the rich abbey of Saint-Mahé in Lower Brittany, and had refused high ecclesiastical preferment; the money he derived in abundance from the superstitious mania of the time was sufficient for his private

undertakings; and the Queen's hand, extended to protect his head, preserved every hair of it from harm.

As to Catherine's devouring thirst for dominion, her desire to acquire power was so great that, in order to grasp it, she could ally herself with the Guises, the enemies of the throne; and to keep the reins of State in her own hands, she adopted every means, sacrificing her friends, and even her children. This woman could not live without the intrigues of rule, as a gambler cannot live without the excitement of play. Though she was an Italian and a daughter of the luxurious Medici, the Calvinists, though they calumniated her plentifully, never accused her of having a lover.

Appreciating the maxim 'Divide to reign,' for twelve years she had been constantly playing off one force against another. As soon as she took the reigns of government into her hands, she was compelled to encourage discord to neutralise the strength of two rival Houses and save the throne. This necessary system justified Henri II.'s foresight. Catherine was the inventor of the political see-saw, imitated since by every Prince who has found himself in a similar position; she upheld, by turns, the Calvinists against the Guises, and the Guises against the Calvinists. Then, after using the two creeds to check each other in the heart of the people, she set the Duc d'Anjou against Charles IX. After using things to counteract each other, she did the same with men, always keeping the clue to their interests in her own hands.

But in this tremendous game, which requires the head of a Louis XI. or a Louis XVIII., the player inevitably is the object of hatred to all parties, and is condemned to win unfailingly, for one lost battle makes every interest his enemy, until indeed by dint of winning he ends by finding no one to play against him. The greater part of Charles IX.'s reign was the triumph of the domestic policy carried out by this wonderful woman. What

extraordinary skill Catherine must have brought into play to get the chief command of the army given to the Duc d'Anjou, under a brave young King thirsting for glory, capable and generous—and in the face of the Connétable Anne de Montmorency! The Duc d'Anjou, in the eyes of all Europe, reaped the honours of Saint-Bartholomew's Day, while Charles IX. had all the odium. After instilling into the King's mind a spurious and covert jealousy of his brother, she worked upon this feeling so as to exhaust Charles IX.'s really fine qualities in the intrigues of rivalry with his brother. Cypierre, their first tutor, and Amyot, Charles IX.'s preceptor, had made their royal charge so noble a man, and had laid the foundations of so great a reign, that the mother hated the son from the very first day when she feared to lose her power after having conquered it with so much difficulty.

These facts have led certain historians to believe that the Queen-mother had a preference for Henri III.; but her behaviour at this juncture proves that her heart was absolutely indifferent towards her children. The Duc d'Anjou, when he went to govern Poland, robbed her of the tool she needed to keep Charles IX.'s mind fully occupied by these domestic intrigues, which had hitherto neutralised his energy by giving food to his vehement feelings. Catherine then hatched the conspiracy of la Mole and Coconnas, in which the Duc d'Alençon had a hand; and he, when he became Duc d'Anjou on his brother's being made King, lent himself very readily to his mother's views, and displayed an ambition which was encouraged by his sister Marguerite, Queen of Navarre.

This plot, now ripened to the point which Catherine desired, aimed at putting the young Duke and his brother-in-law, the King of Navarre, at the head of the Calvinists, at seizing Charles IX., thus making the King, who had no heir, a prisoner, and leaving the throne free for the Duke, who proposed to establish Calvinism in

France. Only a few days before his death, Calvin had won the reward he hoped for—the Reformed creed was called Calvinism in his honour.

La Mole and Coconnas had been arrested fifty days before the night on which this scene opens, to be beheaded in the following April; and if le Laboureur and other judicious writers had not amply proved that they were the victims of the Queen-mother, Cosmo Ruggieri's participation in the affair would be enough to show that she secretly directed it. This man, suspected and hated by the King for reasons which will be presently sufficiently explained, was implicated by the inquiries. He admitted that he had furnished la Mole with an image representing the King and stabbed to the heart with two needles. This form of witchcraft was at that time a capital crime. This kind of bedevilment (called in French *envoûter*, from the Latin *vultus*, it is said) represented one of the most infernal conceptions that hatred could imagine, and the word admirably expresses the magnetic and terrible process carried on, in occult science, by constantly active malevolence on the person devoted to death; its effects being incessantly suggested by the sight of the wax figure. The law at that time considered, and with good reason, that the idea thus embodied constituted high treason. Charles IX. desired the death of the Florentine; Catherine, more powerful, obtained from the Supreme Court, through the intervention of her Councillor Lecamus, that her astrologer should be condemned only to the galleys. As soon as the King was dead, Ruggieri was pardoned by an edict of Henri III.'s, who reinstated him in his revenues and received him at Court.

Catherine had, by this time, struck so many blows on her son's heart, that at this moment he was only anxious to shake off the yoke she had laid on him. Since Marie Touchet's absence, Charles IX., having nothing to

occupy him, had taken to observing very keenly all that went on around him. He had set very skilful snares for certain persons whom he had trusted, to test their fidelity. He had watched his mother's proceedings, and had kept her in ignorance of his own, making use of all the faults she had inculcated in order to deceive her. Eager to efface the feeling of horror produced in France by the massacre of Saint-Bartholomew, he took an active interest in public affairs, presided at the council, and tried by well-planned measures to seize the reins of government. Though the Queen might have attempted to counteract her son's endeavours by using all the influence that maternal authority and her habit of dominion could have over his mind, the downward course of distrust is so rapid that, at the first leap, the son had gone too far to be recalled.

On the day when his mother's words to the King of Poland were repeated to Charles IX., he already felt so ill that the most hideous notions dawned on his mind; and when such suspicions take possession of a son and a King nothing can remove them. In fact, on his death-bed his mother was obliged to interrupt him, exclaiming, 'Do not say that, Monsieur!' when Charles IX., intrusting his wife and daughter to the care of Henri IV., was about to put him on his guard against Catherine.

Though Charles IX. never failed in the superficial respect of which she was so jealous, and she never called the Kings, her sons, anything but Monsieur, the Queen-mother had, for some months past, detected in Charles' manner the ill-disguised irony of revenge held in suspense. But he must be a clever man who could deceive Catherine. She held in her hand this conspiracy of the Duc d'Alençon and la Mole, so as to be able to divert Charles's efforts at emancipation by this new rivalry of a brother; but before making use of it, she was anxious to dissipate the want of confidence which

might make her reconciliation with the King impossible —for how could he leave the power in the hands of a mother who was capable of poisoning him?

Indeed, at this juncture she thought herself so far in danger that she had sent for Strozzi, her cousin, a soldier famous for his death. She held secret councils with Birague and the Gondis, and never had she so frequently consulted the oracle of the Hôtel de Soissons.

Though long habits of dissimulation and advancing years had given Catherine that Abbess-like countenance, haughty and ascetic, expressionless and yet deep, reserved but scrutinising, and so remarkable for any student of her portraits, those about her perceived a cloud over this cold, Florentine mirror. No sovereign was ever a more imposing figure than this woman had made herself since the day when she had succeeded in coercing the Guises after the death of Francis II. Her black velvet hood, with a peak over the forehead, for she never went out of mourning for Henri II., was, as it were, a womanly cowl round her cold, imperious features, to which she could, however, on occasion, give insinuating Italian charm. She was so well made, that she introduced the fashion for women to ride on horseback in such a way as to display their legs; this is enough to prove that hers were of perfect form. Every lady in Europe thenceforth rode on a side-saddle, *à la planchette*, for France had long set the fashions.

To any one who can picture this impressive figure, the scene in the great room that evening has an imposing aspect. The two Queens, so unlike in spirit, in beauty, and in dress, and almost at daggers drawn, were both much too absent-minded to give the impetus for which the courtiers waited to raise their spirits.

The dead secret of the drama which, for the past six months, the son and mother had been cautiously playing, was guessed by some of their followers; the Italians, more especially, had kept an attentive lookout, for if

Catherine should lose the game, they would all be the victims. Under these circumstances, at a moment when Catherine and her son were vying with each other in subterfuges, the King was the centre of observation.

Charles IX., tired by a long day's hunting, and by the serious reflections he brooded over in secret, looked forty this evening. He had reached the last stage of the malady which killed him, and which gave rise to grave suspicions of poison. According to de Thou, the Tacitus of the Valois, the surgeon found unaccountable spots in the King's body (*ex causâ incognitâ reperti livores*). His funeral was even more carelessly conducted than that of Francis II. Charles the Ninth was escorted from Saint-Lazare to Saint-Denis by Brantôme and a few archers of the Guard commanded by the Comte de Solern. This circumstance, added to the mother's supposed hatred of her son, may confirm the accusation brought against her by de Thou; at least it gives weight to the opinion here expressed, that she cared little for any of her children, an indifference which is accounted for by her faith in the pronouncement of astrology. Such a woman could not care for tools that were to break in her hands. Henri III. was the last King under whom she could hope to reign; and that was all.

In our day it seems allowable to suppose that Charles IX. died a natural death. His excesses, his manner of life, the sudden development of his powers, his last struggles to seize the reins of government, his desire to live, his waste of strength, his last sufferings and his last pleasures, all indicate, to impartial judges, that he died of disease of the lungs, a malady at that time little understood, and of which nothing was known; and its symptoms might lead Charles himself to believe that he was poisoned.

The real poison given him by his mother lay in the evil counsels of the courtiers with whom she surrounded

him, who induced him to waste his intellectual and physical powers, and who thus were the cause of a disease which was purely incidental and not congenital.

Charles the Ninth, at this period of his life more than at any other, bore the stamp of a sombre dignity not unbecoming in a King. The majesty of his secret thoughts was reflected in his face, which was remarkable for the Italian complexion he inherited from his mother. This ivory pallor, so beautiful by artificial light, and so well suited with an expression of melancholy, gave added effect to his deep blue eyes showing narrowly under thick eyelids, and thus acquiring that keen acumen which imagination pictures in the glance of a King, while their colour was an aid to dissimulation. Charles's eyes derived an awe-inspiring look from his high, marked eyebrows—accentuating a lofty forehead—which he could lift or lower with singular facility. His nose was long and broad, and thick at the tip—a true lion's nose; he had large ears; light reddish hair; lips of the colour of blood, the lips of a consumptive man; the upper lip thin and satirical, the lower full enough to indicate fine qualities of feeling.

The wrinkles stamped on his brow in early life, when terrible anxieties had blighted its freshness, made his face intensely interesting; more than one had been caused by remorse for the massacre of Saint-Bartholomew, a deed which had been craftily foisted on him; but there were two other lines on his face which would have been eloquent to any student who at that time could have had a special revelation of the principles of modern physiology. These lines made a deep furrow from the cheek-bones to each corner of the mouth, and betrayed the efforts made by an exhausted organisation to respond to mental strain and to violent physical enjoyment. Charles IX. was worn out. The Queen-mother, seeing her work, must have felt some remorse, unless, indeed, politics stifle such a feeling in all who sit under the

purple. If Catherine could have foreseen the effects of her intrigues on her son, she might perhaps have shrunk from them?

It was a terrible spectacle. The King, by nature so strong, had become weak; the spirit, so nobly tempered, was racked by doubts; this man, the centre of authority, felt himself helpless; the naturally firm temper had lost confidence in its power. The warrior's valour had degenerated into ferocity, reserve had become dissimulation, the refined and tender passion of the Valois was an insatiable thirst for pleasure. This great man, misprized, perverted, with every side of his noble spirit chafed to a sore, a King without power, a loving heart without a friend, torn a thousand ways by conflicting schemes, was, at four-and-twenty, the melancholy image of a man who has found everything wanting, who distrusts every one, who is ready to stake his all, even his life. Only lately had he understood his mission, his power, his resources, and the obstacles placed by his mother in the way of the pacification of the kingdom; and the light glowed in a broken lamp.

Two men, for whom the King had so great a regard that he had saved one from the massacre of Saint-Bartholomew, and had dined with the other at a time when his enemies accused him of poisoning the King—his chief physician Jean Chapelain, and the great surgeon Ambroise Paré—had been sent for from the country by Catherine, and, obeying the summons in hot haste, arrived at the King's bedtime. They looked anxiously at their sovereign, and some of the courtiers made whispered inquiries, but they answered with due reserve, saying nothing of the sentence each had secretly pronounced. Now and again the King would raise his heavy eyelids and try to conceal from the bystanders the glance he shot at his mother. Suddenly he rose, and went to stand in front of the fireplace.

'Monsieur de Chiverni,' said he, 'why do you keep the

title of Chancellor of Anjou and Poland? Are you our servant or our brother's?'

'I am wholly yours, Sire,' replied Chiverni, with a bow.

'Well, then, come to-morrow; I mean to send you to Spain, for strange things are doing at the Court of Madrid, gentlemen.'

The King looked at his wife and returned to his chair.

'Strange things are doing everywhere,' he added in a whisper to Marshal Tavannes, one of the favourites of his younger days. And he rose to lead the partner of his youthful pleasures into the recess of an oriel window, saying to him—

'I want you; stay till the last. I must know whether you will be with me or against me. Do not look astonished. I am breaking the leading strings. My mother is at the bottom of all the mischief here. In three months I shall either be dead, or be really King. As you love your life, silence! You are in my secret with Solern and Villeroy. If the least hint is given, it will come from one of you three.—Do not keep too close to me; go and pay your court to my mother; tell her that I am dying, and that you cannot regret it, for that I am but a poor creature.'

Charles IX. walked round the room leaning on his old favourite's shoulder, and discussing his sufferings with him, to mislead inquisitive persons; then, fearing that his coldness might be too marked, he went to talk with the two Queens, calling Birague to his side.

Just then Pinard glided in at the door and came up to Queen Catherine, slipping in like an eel, close to the wall. He murmured two words in the Queen-mother's ear, and she replied with an affirmative nod. The King did not ask what this meant, but he went back to his chair with a scowl round the room of horrible rage and jealousy. This little incident was of immense import-

ance in the eyes of all the Court. This exertion of authority without any appeal to the King was like the drop of water that makes the glass overflow. The young Queen and Countess Fieschi withdrew without the King's paying her the least attention, but the Queen-mother attended her daughter-in-law to the door. Though the misunderstanding between the mother and son lent enormous interest to the movements, looks, and attitude of Catherine and Charles IX., their cold composure plainly showed the courtiers that they were in the way; as soon as the Queen had gone they took their leave. At ten o'clock no one remained but certain intimate persons—the two Gondis, Tavannes, the Comte de Solern, Birague, and the Queen-mother.

The King sat plunged in the deepest melancholy. This silence was fatiguing. Catherine seemed at a loss; she wished to retire, and she wanted the King to attend her to the door, but Charles remained obstinately lost in thought; she rose to bid him good-night, Charles was obliged to follow her example; she took his arm, and went a few steps with him to speak in his ear these few words—

'Monsieur, I have matters of importance to discuss with you.'

As she left, the Queen-mother met the eyes of the Gondis reflected in a glass, and gave them a significant glance, which her son could not see—all the more so because he himself was exchanging meaning looks with the Comte de Solern and Villeroy; Tavannes was absorbed in thought.

'Sire,' said the Maréchal de Retz, coming out of his meditations, 'you seem right royally bored. Do you never amuse yourself nowadays? Heaven above us! where are the times when we went gadding about the streets of nights?'

'Yes, those were good times,' said the King, not without a sigh.

'Why not be off now?' said Monsieur de Birague, bowing himself out, with a wink at the Gondis.

'I always think of that time with pleasure,' cried the Maréchal de Retz.

'I should like to see you on the roofs, Monsieur le Maréchal,' said Tavannes. '*Sacré chat d'Italie*, if you might but break your neck,' he added in an undertone to the King.

'I know not whether you or I should be nimblest at jumping across a yard or a street; but what I do know is, that neither of us is more afraid of death than the other,' replied the Duc de Retz.

'Well, Sir, will you come to scour the town as you did when you were young?' said the Master of the Wardrobe to the King.

Thus at four-and-twenty the unhappy King was no longer thought young, even by his flatterers. Tavannes and the King recalled, like two school-fellows, some of the good tricks they had perpetrated in Paris, and the party was soon made up. The two Italians, being dared to jump from roof to roof across the street, pledged themselves to follow where the King should lead. They all went to put on common clothes.

The Comte de Solern, left alone with the King, looked at him with amazement. The worthy German, though filled with compassion as he understood the position of the King of France, was fidelity and honour itself, but he had not a lively imagination. King Charles, surrounded by enemies, and trusting no one, not even his wife—who, not knowing that his mother and all her servants were inimical to him, had committed some little indiscretions—was happy to have found in Monsieur de Solern a devotion which justified complete confidence. Tavannes and Villeroy were only partly in the secret. The Comte de Solern alone knew the whole of the King's schemes; and he was in every way very useful to his master, inasmuch as that he had a handful of

confidential and attached men at his orders who obeyed him blindly. Monsieur de Solern, who held a command in the Archers of the Guard, had for some days been picking from among his men some who were faithful in their adherence to the King, to form a chosen company. The King could think of everything.

'Well, Solern,' said Charles IX., 'we were needing a pretext for spending a night out of doors. I had the excuse, of course, of Madame de Belleville; but this is better, for my mother can find out what goes on at Marie's house.'

Monsieur de Solern, as he was to attend the King, asked if he might not go the rounds with some of his Germans, and to this Charles consented. By eleven o'clock the King, in better spirits now, set out with his three companions to explore the neighbourhood of the Rue Saint-Honoré.

'I will take my lady by surprise,' said Charles to Tavannes as they went along the Rue de l'Autruche.

To make this nocturnal ploy more intelligible to those who may be ignorant of the topography of old Paris, it will be necessary to explain the position of the Rue de l'Autruche. The part of the Louvre, begun by Henri II., was still being built amid the wreck of houses. Where the wing now stands looking over the Pont des Arts, there was at that time a garden. In the place of the Colonnade there were a moat and a drawbridge on which, somewhat later, a Florentine, the Maréchal d'Ancre, met his death. Beyond this garden rose the turrets of the Hôtel de Bourbon, the residence of the princes of that branch till the day when the Constable's treason (after he was ruined by the confiscation of his possessions, decreed by Francis I., to avoid having to decide between him and his mother) put an end to the trial that had cost France so dear, by the confiscation of the Constable's estates.

This château, which looked well from the river, was not destroyed till the time of Louis XIV.

The Rue de l'Autruche ran from the Rue Saint-Honoré, ending at the Hôtel de Bourbon on the quay. This street, named de l'Autriche on some old plans, and de l'Austruc on others, has, like many more, disappeared from the map. The Rue des Poulies would seem to have been cut across the ground occupied by the houses nearest to the Rue Saint-Honoré. Authors have differed, too, as to the etymology of the name. Some suppose it to be derived from a certain Hôtel d'Osteriche (*Osterrichen*) inhabited in the fourteenth century by a daughter of that house who married a French nobleman. Some assert that this was the site of the Royal Aviaries, whither, once on a time, all Paris crowded to see a living ostrich.

Be it as it may, this tortuous street was made notable by the residences of certain princes of the blood, who dwelt in the vicinity of the Louvre. Since the sovereign had deserted the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, where for several centuries he had lived in the Bastille, and removed to the Louvre, many of the nobility had settled near the palace. The Hôtel de Bourbon had its fellow in the old Hôtel d'Alençon in the Rue Saint-Honoré. This, the palace of the Counts of that name, always an appanage of the Crown, was at this time owned by Henri II.'s fourth son, who subsequently took the title of Duc d'Anjou, and who died in the reign of Henri III., to whom he gave no little trouble. The estate then reverted to the Crown, including the old palace, which was pulled down. In those days a prince's residence was a vast assemblage of buildings; to form some idea of its extent, we have only to go and see the space covered by the Hôtel de Soubise, which is still standing in the Marais. Such a palace included all the buildings necessary to these magnificent lives, which may seem almost problematical to many persons who see how poor is the state of a prince in

these days. There were immense stables, lodgings for physicians, librarians, chancellor, chaplains, treasurers, officials, pages, paid servants, and lackeys, attached to the Prince's person.

Not far from the Rue Saint-Honoré, in a garden belonging to the Hôtel, stood a pretty little house built in 1520 by command of the celebrated Duchesse d'Alençon, which had since been surrounded with other houses erected by merchants. Here the King had installed Marie Touchet. Although the Duc d'Alençon was engaged in a conspiracy against the King at that time, he was incapable of annoying him in such a matter.

As the King was obliged to pass by his lady's door on his way down the Rue Saint-Honoré, where at that time highway robbers had no opportunities within the Barrière des Sergents, he could hardly avoid stopping there. While keeping a lookout for some stroke of luck—a belated citizen to be robbed, or the watch to be thrashed—the King scanned every window, peeping in wherever he saw lights, to see what was going on, or to overhear a conversation. But he found his good city in a provokingly peaceful state. On a sudden, as he came in front of the house kept by a famous perfumer named René, who supplied the Court, the King was seized with one of those swift inspirations which are suggested by antecedent observation, as he saw a bright light shining from the topmost window of the roof.

This perfumer was strongly suspected of doctoring rich uncles when they complained of illness; he was credited at Court with the invention of the famous *Élixir à successions*—the Elixir of Inheritance—and had been accused of poisoning Jeanne d'Albret, Henri IV.'s mother, who was buried without her head having been opened, in spite of the express orders of Charles IX., as a contemporary tells us. For two months past the King had been seeking some stratagem to enable him to spy out the secrets of René's laboratory, whither Como

Ruggieri frequently resorted. Charles intended, if anything should arouse his suspicions, to take steps himself without the intervention of the Police or the Law, over whom his mother would exert the influence of fear or of bribery.

It is beyond all doubt that during the sixteenth century, and the years immediately preceding and following it, poisoning had been brought to a pitch of perfection which remains unknown to modern chemistry, but which is indisputably proved by history. Italy, the cradle of modern science, was at that time the inventor and mistress of these secrets, many of which are lost. Romancers have made such extravagant use of this fact, that whenever they introduce Italians they make them play the part of assassins and poisoners.

But though Italy had then the monopoly of those subtle poisons of which historians tell us, we must regard her supremacy in toxicology merely as part of her pre-eminence in all branches of knowledge and in the arts, in which she led the way for all Europe. The crimes of the period were not hers alone; she served the passions of the age, as she built magnificently, commanded armies, painted glorious frescoes, sang songs, loved Queens, and directed politics. At Florence this hideous art had reached such perfection, that a woman dividing a peach with a duke could make use of a knife of which one side only was poisoned, and, eating the untainted half, dealt death with the other. A pair of perfumed gloves introduced a mortal malady by the pores of the hand; poison could be concealed in a bunch of fresh roses of which the fragrance, inhaled but once, meant certain death. Don Juan of Austria, it is said, was poisoned by a pair of boots.

So King Charles had a right to be inquisitive, and it is easy to imagine how greatly the dark suspicions which tormented him added to his eagerness to detect René in the act.

The old fountain, since rebuilt, at the corner of the Rue de l'Arbre-Sec, afforded this illustrious crew the necessary access to the roof of a house, which the King pretended that he wished to invade, not far from René's. Charles, followed by his companions, began walking along the roofs, to the great terror of the good folks awakened by these marauders, who would call to them, giving them some coarsely grotesque name, listen to family squabbles or love-makings, or do some vexatious damage.

When the two Gondis saw Tavannes and the King clambering along the roof adjoining René's, the Maréchal de Retz sat down, saying he was tired, and his brother remained with him.

'So much the better,' thought the King, glad to be quit of his spies.

Tavannes made fun of the two Italians, who were then left alone in the midst of perfect silence in a place where they had only the sky above them and the cats for listeners. And the brothers took advantage of this position to speak out thoughts which they never would have uttered elsewhere—thoughts suggested by the incidents of the evening.

'Albert,' said the Grand Master to the Marshal, 'the King will get the upper hand of the Queen; we are doing bad business so far as our fortunes are concerned by attaching ourselves to Catherine's. If we transfer our services to the King now, when he is seeking some support against his mother, and needs capable men to rely upon, we shall not be turned out like wild beasts when the Queen-mother is banished, imprisoned, or killed.'

'You will not get far, Charles, by that road,' the Marshal replied. 'You will follow your master into the grave, and he has not long to live; he is wrecked by dissipation; Cosmo Ruggieri has foretold his death next year.'

'A dying boar has often gored the hunter,' said Charles de Gondi. 'This plot of the Duc d'Alençon with the King of Navarre and the Prince de Condé, of which la Mole and Coconnas are taking the *onus*, is dangerous rather than useful. In the first place, the King of Navarre, whom the Queen-mother hopes to take in the fact, is too suspicious of her, and will have nothing to do with it. He means to get the benefit of the conspiracy and run none of the risks. And now, the last idea is to place the crown on the head of the Duc d'Alençon, who is to turn Calvinist.'

'*Budelone!* Dolt that you are, do not you see that this plot enables our Queen to learn what the Huguenots can do with the Duc d'Alençon, and what the King means to do with the Huguenots? For the King is temporising with them. And Catherine, to set the King riding on a wooden horse, will betray the plot which must nullify his schemes.'

'Ay!' said Charles de Gondi, 'by dint of taking our advice she can beat us at our own game. That is very good.'

'Good for the Duc d'Anjou, who would rather be King of France than King of Poland; I am going to explain matters to him.'

'You are going, Albert?'

'To-morrow. Is it not my duty to attend the King of Poland? I shall join him at Venice, where the Signori have undertaken to amuse him.'

'You are prudence itself.'

'*Che bestia!* I assure you solemnly that there is not the slightest danger for either of us at Court. If there were, should I leave? I would stick to our kind Mistress.'

'Kind!' said the Grand Master. 'She is the woman to drop her tools if she finds them too heavy.'

'*O coglione!* You call yourself a soldier, and are afraid of death? Every trade has its duties, and our

duty is to Fortune. When we attach ourselves to monarchs who are the fount of all temporal power, and who protect and ennoble and enrich our families, we have to give them such love as inflames the soul of the martyr for heaven; when they sacrifice us for the throne we may perish, for we die as much for ourselves as for them, but our family does not perish.—*Ecco;* I have said!'

'You are quite right, Albert; you have got the old duchy of Retz.'

'Listen to me,' said the Duc de Retz. 'The Queen has great hopes of the Ruggieri and their arts to reconcile her to her son. When that artful youth refused to have anything to do with René, our Queen easily guessed what her son's suspicions were. But who can tell what the King has in his pocket? Perhaps he is only doubting as to what fate he intends for his mother; he hates her, you understand? He said something of his purpose to the Queen, and the Queen talked of it to Madame de Fieschi; Madame de Fieschi carried it on to the Queen-mother, and since then the King has kept out of his wife's way.'

'It was high time——' said Charles de Gondi.

'What to do?' asked the Marshal.

'To give the King something to do,' replied the Grand Master, who, though he was on less intimate terms with Catherine than his brother, was not less clear-sighted.

'Charles,' said de Retz gravely, 'I have started on a splendid road; but if you want to be a Duke, you must, like me, be our Mistress's ready tool. She will remain Queen; she is the strongest. Madame de Sauves is still devoted to her; and the King of Navarre and the Duc d'Alençon are devoted to Madame de Sauves; Catherine will always have them in leading strings under this King, as she will have them under King Henri III. Heaven send he may not be ungrateful!'

'Why?'

'His mother does too much for him.'

'Hark! There is a noise in the Rue Saint-Honoré,' cried Charles de Gondi. 'René's door is being locked. Cannot you hear a number of men? They must have taken the Ruggieri.'

'The devil! What a piece of prudence! The King has not shown his usual impetuosity. But where will he imprison them?—Let us see what is going on.'

The brothers reached the corner of the Rue de l'Autruche at the moment when the King was entering his mistress's house. By the light of the torches held by the gatekeeper they recognised Tavannes and the Ruggieri.

'Well, Tavannes,' the Grand Master called out as he ran after the King's companion, who was making his way back to the Louvre, 'what adventures have you had?'

'We dropped on a full council of wizards, and arrested two who are friends of yours, and who will explain for the benefit of French noblemen by what means you, who are not Frenchmen, have contrived to clutch two Crown offices,' said Tavannes, half in jest.

'And the King?' asked the Grand Master, who was not much disturbed by Tavannes' hostility.

'He is staying with his mistress.'

'We have risen to where we stand by the most absolute devotion to our masters, a brilliant and noble career which you too have adopted, my dear Duke,' replied the Maréchal de Retz.

The three courtiers walked on in silence. As they bid each other good-night, rejoining their retainers, who escorted them home, two men lightly glided along the Rue de l'Autruche in the shadow of the wall. These were the King and the Comte de Solern, who soon reached the river-bank at a spot where a boat and

rowers, engaged by the German Count, were awaiting them. In a few minutes they had reached the opposite shore.

'My mother is not in bed,' cried the King, 'she will see us; we have not made a good choice of our meeting-place.'

'She will think some duel is in the wind,' said Solern. 'And how is she to distinguish who we are at this distance?'

'Well! Even if she sees me!' cried Charles IX. 'I have made up my mind now.'

'The King and his friend jumped on shore, and hurried off towards the Pré aux Clercs. On arriving there, the Comte de Solern, who went first, parleyed with a man on sentry, with whom he exchanged a few words, and who then withdrew to a group of others.

Presently two men, who seemed to be princes by the way the outposts saluted them, left the spot where they were in hiding behind some broken fencing, and came to the King, to whom they bent the knee; but Charles IX. raised them before they could touch the ground, saying—

'No ceremony; here we are all gentlemen together.'

These three were now joined by a venerable old man, who might have been taken for the Chancellor de l'Hôpital, but that he had died the year before. Then all four walked on as quickly as possible to reach a spot where their conversation could not be overheard by their retainers, and Solern followed them at a little distance to keep guard over the King. This faithful servant felt some doubts which Charles did not share, for to him indeed life was too great a burden. The Count was the only witness to the meeting on the King's side.

It soon became interesting.

'Sire,' said one of the speakers, 'the Connétable de Montmorency, the best friend the King, your father, had, and possessed of all his secrets, agreed with the

Maréchal de Saint-André that Madame Catherine should be sewn up in a sack and thrown into the river. If that had been done, many good men would be alive now.'

'I have executions enough on my conscience, Monsieur,' replied the King.

'Well, Sire,' said the youngest of the four gentlemen, 'from the depths of exile Queen Catherine would still manage to interfere and find men to help her. Have we not everything to fear from the Guises, who, nine years since, schemed for a monstrous Catholic alliance, in which your Majesty is not included, and which is a danger to the throne? This alliance is a Spanish invention—for Spain still cherishes the hope of levelling the Pyrenees. Sire, Calvinism can save France by erecting a moral barrier between this nation and one that aims at the Empire of the world. If the Queen-mother finds herself in banishment, she will throw herself on Spain and the Guises.

'Gentlemen,' said the King, 'I will have you to know that, with your help, and with peace established on a basis of confidence, I will undertake to make every soul in the kingdom quake. By God and every sacred relic! it is time that the Royal authority should assert itself. Understand this clearly; so far, my mother is right, power is slipping from your grasp, as it is from mine. Your estates, your privileges are bound to the throne; when you have allowed religion to be overthrown, the hands you are using as tools will turn against the Monarchy and against you.

'I have had enough of fighting ideas with weapons that cannot touch them. Let us see whether Protestantism can make its way if left to itself; above all, let us see what the spirit of that faction means to attack. The Admiral, God be merciful to him, was no enemy of mine. He swore to me that he would restrain the revolt within the limits of spiritual feeling, and in the temporal kingdom secure mastery to the King and submissive

subjects. Now, gentlemen, if the thing is still in your power, set an example, and help your sovereign to control the malcontents who are disturbing the peace of both parties alike. War robs us of all our revenue, and ruins the country; I am weary of this troubled State—so much so, that, if it should be absolutely necessary, I would sacrifice my mother. I would do more; I would have about me a like number of Catholics and of Protestants, and I would hang Louis XI.'s axe over their heads to keep them equal. If Messieurs de Guise plot a Holy Alliance which endangers the Crown, the executioner shall begin on them.

'I understand the griefs of my people, and am quite ready to cut freely at the nobles who bring trouble on our country. I care little for questions of conscience; I mean henceforth to have submissive subjects who will work, under my rule, at the prosperity of the State.

'Gentlemen, I give you ten days to treat with your adherents, to break up your plots, and return to me, who will be a father to you. If you are refractory, you will see great changes. I shall make use of smaller men who, at my bidding, will rush upon the great lords. I will follow the example of a king who pacified his realm by striking down greater men than you are who dared to defy him. If Catholic troops are wanting, I can appeal to my brother of Spain to defend a threatened throne; nay, and if I need a Minister to carry out my will, he will lend me the Duke of Alva.'

'In that event, Sire, we can find Germans to fight your Spaniards,' said one of the party.

'I may remind you, cousin,' said Charles IX. coldly, 'that my wife's name is Elizabeth of Austria; your allies on that side might fail you. But take my advice; let us fight this alone without calling in the foreigner. You are the object of my mother's hatred, and you care enough for me to play the part of second in my duel with her—well, then, listen. You stand so high in my esteem,

that I offer you the office of High Constable; you will not betray us as the other has done.'

The Prince thus addressed took the King's hand in a friendly grasp, exclaiming—

'God's 'ounds, brother, that is indeed forgiving evil! But, Sire, the head cannot move without the tail, and our tail is hard to drag along. Give us more than ten days. We still need at least a month to make the rest hear reason. By the end of that time we shall be the masters.'

'A month, so be it; Villeroy is my only plenipotentiary. Take no word but his, whatever any one may say.'

'One month,' said the three other gentlemen; 'that will be enough time.'

'Gentlemen,' said the King, 'we are but five, all men of mettle. If there is any treachery, we shall know with whom to deal.'

The three gentlemen left the King with every mark of deep respect and kissed his hand.

As the King recrossed the Seine, four o'clock was striking by the Louvre clock.

Queen Catherine was still up.

'My mother is not gone to bed,' said Charles to the Comte de Solern.

'She too has her forge,' said the German.

'My dear Count, what must you think of a king who is reduced to conspiracy?' said Charles IX. bitterly, after a pause.

'I think, Sire, that if you would only allow me to throw that woman into the river, as our young friend said, France would soon be at peace.'

'Parricide!—and after Saint-Bartholomew's!' said the King. 'No, no—Exile. Once fallen, my mother would not have an adherent or a partisan.'

'Well, then, Sire,' the Count went on, 'allow me to take her into custody now, at once, and escort her

beyond the frontier; for by to-morrow she will have won you round.'

'Well,' said the King, 'come to my forge; no one can hear us there. Besides, I am anxious that my mother should know nothing of the arrest of the Ruggieri. If she knows I am within, the good lady will suspect nothing, and we will concert the measures for arresting her.'

When the King, attended by Solern, went into the low room which served as his workshop, he smiled as he pointed to his forge and various tools.

'I do not suppose,' said he, 'that of all the kings France may ever have, there will be another with a taste for such a craft. But when I am really King, I shall not forge swords; they shall all be sheathed.'

'Sire,' said the Comte de Solern, 'the fatigues of tennis, your work at the forge, hunting, and—may I say it?—love-making, are chariots lent you by the Devil to hasten your journey to Saint-Denis.'

'Ah, Solern!' said the King sadly, 'if only you could feel the fire they have set burning in my heart and body. Nothing can slake it.—Are you sure of the men who are guarding the Ruggieri?'

'As sure as of myself.'

'Well, in the course of this day I shall have made up my mind. Think out the means of acting, and I will give you my final instructions at five this evening, at Madame de Belleville's.

The first gleams of daybreak were struggling with the lights in the King's workshop, where the Comte de Solern had left him alone, when he heard the door open and saw his mother, looking like a ghost in the gloom. Though Charles IX. was highly strung and nervous, he did not start, although under the circumstances this apparition had an ominous and grotesque aspect.

'Monsieur,' said she, 'you are killing yourself——'

'I am fulfilling my horoscopes,' he retorted, with a bitter smile. 'But you, Madam, are you as ill as I am?'

'We have both watched through the night, Monsieur, but with very different purpose. When you were setting out to confer with your bitterest enemies in the open night, and hiding it from your mother, with the connivance of Tavannes and the Gondis, with whom you pretended to be scouring the town, I was reading dispatches which prove that a terrible conspiracy is hatching, in which your brother the Duc d'Alençon is implicated with your brother-in-law, the King of Navarre, the Prince de Condé, and half the nobilty of your kingdom. Their plan is no less than to snatch the Crown from you by taking possession of your person. These gentlemen have already a following of fifty thousand men, all good soldiers.'

'Indeed!' said the King incredulously.

'Your brother is becoming a Huguenot,' the Queen went on.

'My brother joining the Huguenots?' cried Charles, brandishing the iron bar he held.

'Yes. The Duc d'Alençon, a Huguenot at heart, is about to declare himself. Your sister, the Queen of Navarre, has scarcely a tinge of affection left for you. She loves Monsieur le Duc d'Alençon, she loves Bussy, and she also loves little la Mole.'

'What a large heart!' said the King.

'Little la Mole, to grow great,' the Queen went on, 'can think of no better means than making a King of France to his mind. Then, it is said, he is to be High Constable.'

'That damned Margot!' cried the King. 'This is what comes of her marrying a heretic——'

'That would be nothing; but then there is the head of the younger branch, whom you have placed near the throne against my warnings, and who only wants to see you all kill each other! The House of Bourbon is the

enemy of the House of Valois. Mark this, Monsieur, a younger branch must always be kept in abject poverty, for it is born with the spirit of conspiracy, and it is folly to give it weapons when it has none, or to leave them in its possession when it takes them. The younger branches must be impotent for mischief—that is the law of sovereignty. The sultans of Asia observe it.

'The proofs are upstairs in my closet, whither I begged you to follow me when we parted last night, but you had other projects. Within a month, if we do not take a high hand, your fate will be that of Charles the Simple.'

'Within a month!' exclaimed Charles, amazed at the coincidence of this period with the term fixed by the princes that very night. 'In a month we shall be the masters,' thought he to himself, repeating their words. 'You have proofs, Madam?' he asked aloud.

'They are unimpeachable, Monsieur; they are supplied by my daughter Marguerite. Terrified by the probable outcome of such a coalition, in spite of her weakness for your brother d'Alençon, the throne of the Valois lay, for once, nearer to her heart than all her amours. She asks indeed, as the reward of her revelation, that la Mole shall go scot free; but that popinjay seems to me to be a rogue we ought to get rid of, as well as the Comte de Coconnas, your brother d'Alençon's right-hand man. As to the Prince de Condé, that boy would agree to anything so long as I may be flung into the river; I do not know if that is his idea of a handsome return on his wedding-day for the pretty wife I got him.

'This is a serious matter, Monsieur. You spoke of predictions! I know of one which says that the Bourbons will possess the throne of the Valois; and if we do not take care, it will be fulfilled. Do not be vexed with your sister, she has acted well in this matter.'

'My son,' she went on, after a pause, with an assumption of tenderness in her tone, 'many evil-minded persons, in the interest of the Guises, want to sow dissension between you and me, though we are the only two persons in the realm whose interests are identical. Reflect. You blame yourself now, I know, for Saint Bartholomew's night; you blame me for persuading you to it. But Catholicism, Monsieur, ought to be the bond of Spain, France, and Italy, three nations which by a secretly and skilfully worked scheme may, in the course of time, be united under the House of Valois. Do not forfeit your chances by letting the cord slip which includes these three kingdoms in the pale of the same faith.

'Why should not the Valois and the Medici carry out, to their great glory, the project of Charles v., who lost his head? Let those descendants of Jane the Crazy people the new world which they are grasping at. The Medici, masters of Florence and Rome, will subdue Italy to your rule; they will secure all its advantages by a treaty of commerce and alliance, and recognise you as their liege lord for the fiefs of Piedmont, the Milanese, and Naples over which you have rights. These, Monsieur, are the reasons for the war to the death we are waging with the Huguenots. Why do you compel us to repeat these things?

'Charlemagne made a mistake when he pushed northwards. France is a body of which the heart is on the Gulf of Lyons, and whose two arms are Spain and Italy. Thus we should command the Mediterranean, which is like a basket into which all the wealth of the East is poured to the benefit of the Venetians now, in the teeth of Philip II.

'And if the friendship of the Medici and your inherited rights can thus entitle you to hope for Italy, force, or alliance, or perhaps inheritance, may give you Spain. There you must step in before the ambitious

House of Austria, to whom the Guelphs would have sold Italy, and who still dream of possessing Spain. Though your wife is a daughter of that line, humble Austria, hug her closely to stifle her! There lie the enemies of your dominion, since from thence comes aid for the Reformers.—Do not listen to men who would profit by our disagreement, and who fill your head with trouble by representing me as your chief enemy at home. Have I hindered you from having an heir? Is it my fault that your mistress has a son and your wife only a daughter? Why have you not by this time three sons, who would cut off all this sedition at the root?—Is it my part, Monsieur, to reply to these questions? If you had a son, would Monsieur d'Alençon conspire against you?'

As she spoke these words, Catherine fixed her eyes on Charles IX. with the fascinating gaze of a bird of prey on its victim. The daughter of the Medici was beautiful in her way; her real feelings illumined her face, which, like that of a gambler at the green-table, was radiant with ambitious greed. Charles IX. saw her no longer as the mother of one man, but, as she had been called, the mother of armies and empires (*mater castrorum*). Catherine had spread the pinions of her genius, and was boldly soaring in the realm of high politics of the Medici and the Valois, sketching the vast plans which had frightened Henri II., and which, transmitted by the Medici to Richelieu, were stored in the Cabinet of the House of Bourbon. But Charles IX., seeing his mother take so many precautions, supposed them to be necessary, and wondered to what end she was taking them. He looked down; he hesitated; his distrust was not to be dispelled by words.

Catherine was astonished to see what deeply founded suspicion lurked in her son's heart.

'Well, Monsieur,' she went on, 'do you not choose to understand me? What are we, you and I, compared

with the eternity of a royal Crown? Do you suspect me of any purposes but those which must agitate us who dwell in the sphere whence empires are governed?'

'Madam,' said he, 'I will follow you to your closet —we must act——'

'Act?' cried Catherine. 'Let them go their way and take them in the act; the law will rid you of them. For God's sake, Monsieur, let them see us smiling.'

The Queen withdrew. The King alone remained standing for a minute, for he had sunk into extreme dejection.

'On which side are the snares?' he said aloud. 'Is it she who is deceiving me, or they? What is the better policy? *Deus! discerne causam meam*,' he cried, with tears in his eyes. 'Life is a burthen to me. Whether natural or compulsory, I would rather meet death than these contradictory torments,' he added, and he struck the hammer on his anvil with such violence that the vaults of the Louvre quaked. 'Great God!' he exclaimed, going out and looking up at the sky, 'Thou for whose holy religion I am warring, give me the clearness of Thine eyes to see into my mother's heart by questioning the Ruggieri.'

The little house inhabited by the Lady of Belleville, where Charles had left his prisoners, was the last but one in the Rue de l'Autruche, near the Rue Saint-Honoré. The street-gate, guarded by two little lodges built of brick, looked very plain at a time when gates and all their accessories were so elaborately treated. The entrance consisted of two stone pillars, diamond-cut, and the architrave was graced with the reclining figure of a woman holding a cornucopia. The gate, of timber covered with heavy iron scroll-work, had a wicket peephole at the level of the eye for spying any one who desired admittance. In each lodge a porter lived, and

Charles's caprice insisted that a gatekeeper should be on the watch day and night.

There was a little courtyard in front of the house paved with Venetian mosaic. At that time, when carriages had not been invented, and ladies rode on horseback or in litters, the courtyards could be splendid with no fear of injury from horses or vehicles. We must constantly bear these facts in mind to understand the narrowness of the streets, the small extent of the forecourts, and various other details of the dwellings of the fifteenth century.

The house, of one story above the ground floor, had at the top a sculptured frieze, on which rested a roof sloping up from all the four sides to a flat space at the top. The sides were pierced by dormer windows adorned with architraves and side-posts, which some great artist had chiselled into delicate arabesques. All the three windows of the first-floor rooms were equally conspicuous for this embroidery in stone, thrown into relief by the red-brick walls. On the ground floor a double flight of outside steps, elegantly sculptured—the balcony being remarkable for a true lovers' knot—led to the house door, decorated in the Venetian style with stone cut into pointed lozenges, a form of ornament that was repeated on the window-jambs on each side of the door.

A garden laid out in the fashion of the time, and full of rare flowers, occupied a space behind the house of equal extent with the forecourt. A vine hung over the walls. A silver pine stood in the centre of a grass plot; the flower borders were divided from the turf by winding paths leading to a little bower of clipped yews at the further end. The garden walls, covered with a coarse mosaic of coloured pebbles, pleased the eye by a richness of colour that harmonised with the hues of the flowers. The garden front of the house, like the front to the court, had a pretty balcony from the middle

window over the door; and on both façades alike the architectural treatment of this middle window was carried up to the frieze of the cornice, with a bow that gave it the appearance of a lantern. The sills of the other windows were inlaid with fine marbles let into the stone.

Notwithstanding the perfect taste evident in this building, it had a look of gloom. It was shut out from the open day by neighbouring houses and the roofs of the Hôtel d'Alençon, which cast their shadow over the courtyard and garden; then absolute silence prevailed. Still, this silence, this subdued light, this solitude, were restful to a soul that could give itself up to a single thought, as in a cloister where we may meditate, or in a snug home where we may love.

Who can fail now to conceive of the interior elegance of this dwelling, the only spot in all his kingdom where the last Valois but one could pour out his heart, confess his sufferings, give play to his taste for the arts, and enjoy the poetry he loved—pleasures denied him by the cares of his most ponderous royalty. There alone were his lofty soul and superior qualities appreciated; there alone, for a few brief months, the last of his life, could he know the joys of fatherhood, to which he abandoned himself with the frenzy which his presentiment of an imminent and terrible death lent to all his actions.

In the afternoon of this day, Marie was finishing her toilet in her oratory—the ladies' boudoir of that time. She was arranging the curls of her fine black hair, so as to leave a few locks to turn over a new velvet coif, and was looking attentively at herself in the mirror.

'It is nearly four o'clock! That interminable Council must be at an end by now,' said she to herself. 'Jacob is back from the Louvre, where they are greatly disturbed by reason of the number of councillors convened, and by the duration of the sitting. What can have happened, some disaster? Dear Heaven! does *he* know how the spirit is worn by waiting in vain? He is gone hunting,

perhaps. If he is amused, all is well. If I see him happy, I shall forget my sorrows——'

She pulled down her bodice round her waist, that there might not be a wrinkle in it, and turned to see how her dress fitted in profile; but then she saw the King reclining on a couch. The carpeted floors deadened the sound of footsteps so effectually, that he had come in without being heard.

'You startled me,' she said, with a cry of surprise, which she instantly checked.

'You were thinking of me, then?' said the King.

'When am I not thinking of you?' she asked him, sitting down by his side.

She took off his cap and cloak, and passed her hands through his hair as if to comb it with her fingers. Charles submitted without speaking. Marie knelt down to study her royal Master's pale face, and discerned in it the lines of terrible fatigue and of a more devouring melancholy than any she had ever been able to scare away. She checked a tear, and kept silence, not to irritate a grief she as yet knew nothing of by some ill-chosen word. She did what tender wives do in such cases; she kissed the brow seamed with precocious wrinkles and the hollow cheeks, trying to breathe the freshness of her own spirit into that careworn soul through its infusion into gentle caresses, which, however, had no effect. She raised her head to the level of the King's, embracing him fondly with her slender arms, and then laid her face on his labouring breast, waiting for the opportune moment to question the stricken man.

'My Charlot, will you not tell your poor, anxious friend what are the thoughts that darken your brow and take the colour from your dear, red lips?'

'With the exception of Charlemagne,' said he, in a dull, hollow voice, 'every King of France of the name of Charles has come to a miserable end.'

'Pooh!' said she. 'What of Charles VIII.?'

'In the prime of life,' replied the King, 'the poor man knocked his head against a low doorway in the château d'Amboise, which he was decorating splendidly, and he died in dreadful pain. His death gave the Crown to our branch.'

'Charles VII. reconquered his kingdom.'

'Child, he died'—and the King lowered his voice—'of starvation, in the dread of being poisoned by the Dauphin, who had already caused the death of his fair Agnes. The father dreaded his son. Now, the son dreads his mother!'

'Why look back on the past?' said she, remembering the terrible existence of Charles VI.

'Why not, dear heart? Kings need not have recourse to diviners to read the fate that awaits them; they have only to study history. I am at this time engaged in trying to escape the fate of Charles the Simple, who was bereft of his crown, and died in prison after seven years' captivity.'

'Charles V. drove out the English!' she cried triumphantly.

'Not he, but du Guesclin; for he, poisoned by Charles of Navarre, languished in sickness.'

'But Charles IV.?' said she.

'He married three times and had no heir, in spite of the masculine beauty that distinguished the sons of Philip the Handsome. The first Valois dynasty ended in him. The second Valois will end in the same way. The Queen has only brought me a daughter, and I shall die without leaving any child to come, for a minority would be the greatest misfortune that could befall the kingdom. Besides, if I had a son, would he live?—Charles is a name of ill-omen, Charlemagne exhausted all the luck attending it. If I could be King of France again, I would not be called Charles X.'

'Who then aims at your crown?'

'My brother d'Alençon is plotting against me. I see enemies on every side——'

'Monsieur,' said Marie, with an irresistible pout. 'Tell me some merrier tales.'

'My dearest treasure,' said the King vehemently, 'never call me *Monsieur*, even in jest. You remind me of my mother, who incessantly offends me with that word. I feel as if she deprived me of my crown. She says "My son" to the Duc d'Anjou, that is to say, the King of Poland.'

'Sire,' said Marie, folding her hands as if in prayer, 'there is a realm where you are adored, which your Majesty fills entirely with glory and strength; and there the word Monsieur means my gentle lord.'

She unclasped her hands, and with a pretty action pointed to her heart. The words were so sweetly musical—*musiquées*, to use an expression of the period, applied to love-songs—that Charles took Marie by the waist, raised her with the strength for which he was noted, seated her on his knee, and gently rubbed his forehead against the curls his mistress had arranged with such care.

Marie thought this a favourable moment; she ventured on a kiss or two, which Charles allowed rather than accepted; then, between two kisses, she said—

'If my people told the truth, you were scouring Paris all night, as in the days when you played the scapegrace younger son?'

'Yes,' said the King, who sat lost in thought.

'Did not you thrash the watch and rob certain good citizens?—And who are the men placed under my guard, and who are such criminals that you have forbidden all communication with them? No girl was ever barred in with greater severity than these men, who have had neither food nor drink. Solern's Germans have not allowed any one to go near the room where you left them. Is it a joke? Or is it a serious matter?'

'Yes,' said the King, rousing himself from his reverie, 'last night I went scampering over the roofs with

Tavannes and the Gondis. I wanted to have the company of my old comrades in folly. But our legs are not what they were; we did not dare jump across the streets. However, we crossed two courtyards by leaping from roof to roof. The last time, however, when we alighted on a gable close by this, as we clung to the bar of a chimney, we decided, Tavannes and I, that we could not do it again. If either of us had been alone, he would not have tried it.'

'You were the first to jump, I will wager.'

The King smiled.

'I know why you risk your life so.'

'Hah, fair sorceress!'

'You are weary of life.'

'Begone with witchcraft! I am haunted by it!' said the King, grave once more.

'My witchcraft is love,' said she, with a smile. 'Since the happy day when you first loved me, have I not always guessed your thoughts? And if you will suffer me to say so, the thoughts that torment you to-day are not worthy of a King.'

'Am I a King?' said he bitterly.

'Can you not be King? What did Charles VII. do, whose name you bear? He listened to his mistress, my lord, and he won back his kingdom, which was invaded by the English then as it is now by the adherents of the New Religion. Your last act of State opened the road you must follow: Exterminate heresy.'

'You used to blame the stratagem,' said Charles, 'and now——'

'It is accomplished,' she put in. 'Besides, I am of Madame Catherine's opinion. It was better to do it yourself than to leave it to the Guises.'

'Charles VII. had only men to fight against, and I have to battle with ideas,' the King went on. 'You may kill men; you cannot kill words! The Emperor Charles V. gave up the task; his son, Don Philip, is

spending himself in the attempt. We shall die of it, we kings. On whom can I depend? On my right, with the Catholics I find the Guises threatening me; on my left, the Calvinists will never forgive the death of my poor Father Coligny, nor the blood-letting of August; besides, they want to be rid of us altogether. And in front of me, my mother——'

'Arrest her; reign alone,' said Marie, whispering in his ear.

'I wanted to do so yesterday—but I do not to-day. You speak of it lightly enough.'

'There is no such great distance between the daughter of an apothecary and the daughter of a leech,' said Marie Touchet, who would often laugh at the parentage falsely given her.

The King knit his brows.

'Marie, take no liberties. Catherine de' Medici is my mother, and you ought to tremble at——'

'But what are you afraid of?'

'Poison!' cried the King, beside himself.

'Poor boy!' said Marie, swallowing her tears, for so much strength united to so much weakness moved her deeply. 'Oh!' she went on, 'how you make me hate Madame Catherine, who used to seem so kind; but her kindness seems to be nothing but perfidy. Why does she do me so much good and you so much evil? While I was away in Dauphiné I heard a great many things about the beginning of your reign which you had concealed from me; and the Queen your mother seems to have been the cause of all your misfortunes.'

'How?' said the King, with eager interest.

'Women whose soul and intentions are pure rule the men they love through their virtues; but women who do not truly wish them well find a motive power in their evil inclinations. Now the Queen has turned many fine qualities in you into vices, and made you believe that your bad ones were virtues. Was that acting a mother's

part?—Be a tyrant like Louis XI., make everybody dreadfully afraid of you, imitate Don Philip, banish the Italians, hunt out the Guises, and confiscate the estates of the Calvinists; you will rise to stand in solitude, and you will save the Crown. The moment is favourable; your brother is in Poland.'

'We are two infants in politics,' said Charles bitterly. 'We only know how to love. Alas! dear heart, yesterday I could think of all this; I longed to achieve great things. Puff! my mother has blown down my house of cards. From afar difficulties stand out as clearly as mountain peaks. I say to myself, "I will put an end to Calvinism; I will bring Messieurs de Guise to their senses; I will cut adrift from the Court of Rome; I will rely wholly on the people of the middle class"; in short, at a distance everything looks easy, but when we try to climb the mountains, the nearer we get, the more obstacles we discern.

'Calvinism in itself is the last thing the party-leaders care about; and the Guises, those frenzied Catholics, would be in despair if the Calvinists were really exterminated. Every man thinks of his own interests before all else, and religious opinions are but a screen for insatiable ambition. Charles IX.'s party is the weakest of all; those of the King of Navarre, of the King of Poland, of the Duc d'Alençon, of the Condés, of the Guises, of my mother, form coalitions against each other, leaving me alone even in the Council Chamber. In the midst of so many elements of disturbance my mother is the stronger, and she has just shown me that my plans are inane. We are surrounded by men who defy the law. The axe of Louis XI. of which you speak is not in our grasp. The Parlement would never sentence the Guises, nor the King of Navarre, nor the Condés, nor my brothers. It would think it was setting the kingdom in a blaze. What is wanted is the courage to command murder; the throne must come to that, with these insolent wretches who have

nullified justice; but where can I find faithful hands? The Council I held this morning disgusted me with everything—treachery on all sides, antagonistic interests everywhere!

'I am tired of wearing the crown; all I ask is to die in peace.'

And he sank into gloomy somnolence.

'Disgusted with everything!' echoed Marie Touchet sadly, but respecting her lover's heavy torpor.

Charles was, in fact, a prey to utter prostration of mind and body, resulting from over-fatigue of every faculty, and enhanced by the dejection caused by the vast scale of his misfortunes and the evident impossibility of overcoming them in the face of such a multiplicity of difficulties as genius itself takes alarm at. The King's depression was proportionate to the height to which his courage and his ideas had soared during the last few months; and now a fit of nervous melancholy, part, in fact, of his malady, had come over him as he left the long sitting of the Council he had held in his closet. Marie saw that he was suffering from a crisis when everything is irritating and importunate—even love; so she remained on her knees, her head in the King's lap as he sat with his fingers buried in her hair without moving, without speaking, without sighing, and she was equally still. Charles IX. was sunk in the lethargy of helplessness; and Marie, in the dark despair of a loving woman, who can see the border-line ahead where love must end.

Thus the lovers sat for some little time in perfect silence, in the mood when every thought is a wound, when the clouds of a mental storm hide even the remembrance of past happiness.

Marie believed herself to be in some sort to blame for this terrible dejection. She wondered, not without alarm, whether the King's extravagant joy at welcoming her back, and the vehement passion she could not contend with, were not helping to wreck his mind and

frame. As she looked up at her lover, her eyes streaming with tears that bathed her face, she saw tears in his eyes too and on his colourless cheeks. This sympathy, uniting them even in sorrow, touched Charles IX. so deeply, that he started up like a horse that feels the spur. He put his arm round Marie's waist, and before she knew what he was doing had drawn her down on the couch.

'I will be King no more!' he said. 'I will be nothing but your lover, and forget everything in that joy. I will die happy, and not eaten up with the cares of a throne.'

The tone in which he spoke, the fire that blazed in eyes, just now so dull, instead of pleasing Marie, gave her a terrible pang; at that moment she blamed her love for contributing to the illness of which the King was dying.

'You forget your prisoners,' said she, starting up suddenly.

'What do I care about the men? They have my permission to kill me.'

'What? Assassins!' said she.

'Do not be uneasy, we have them safe, dear child. —Now, think not of them, but of me. Say, do you not love me?'

'Sire!' she cried.

'Sire!' he repeated, flashing sparks from his eyes, so violent was his first surge of fury at his mistress's ill-timed deference. 'You are in collusion with my mother.'

'Great God!' cried Marie, turning to the picture over her praying-chair, and trying to get to it to put up a prayer. 'Oh! make him understand me!'

'What!' said the King sternly. 'Have you any sin on your soul?'

And still holding her in his arms, he looked deep into her eyes. 'I have heard of the mad passion of one d'Entragues for you,' he went on, looking wildly at her,

'and since their grandfather Capitaine Balzac married a Visconti of Milan, those rascals hesitate at nothing.'

Marie gave the King such a look of pride that he was ashamed. Just then the cry was heard of the infant Charles de Valois from the adjoining room; he was just awake, and his nurse was no doubt bringing him to his mother.

'Come in, la Bourguignonne,' said Marie, taking the child from his nurse and bringing him to the King. 'You are more of a child than he,' said she, half angry, but half appeased.

'He is a fine boy,' said Charles IX., taking his son in his arms.

'No one but me can know how like you he is,' said Marie. 'He has your smile and ways already.'

'What, so young?' said the King, smiling.

'Men will never believe such things,' said she; 'but look, my Charlot, play with him, look at him—now, am I not right?'

'It is true,' said the King, startled by a movement on the infant's part, which struck him as the miniature reproduction of a trick of his own.

'Pretty flower!' said his mother. 'He will never go away from me; he will never make me unhappy.'

The King played with the child, tossing it, kissing it with entire devotion, speaking to it in those vague and foolish words, the onomatopœia of mothers and nurses; his voice was childlike, his brow cleared, joy came back to his saddened countenance; and when Marie saw that her lover had forgotten everything, she laid her head on his shoulder and whispered in his ear—

'Will not you tell me, my Charlot, why you put assassins in my keeping, and who these men are, and what you intend to do with them? And whither were you going across the roofs? I hope there was no woman in the case.'

'Then you still love me so well?' said the King,

caught by the bright flash of one of those questioning looks which women can give at a critical moment.

'You could doubt me,' replied she, as the tears gathered under her beautiful girlish eyelids.

'There are women in my adventure, but they are witches. Where was I?'

'We were quite near here, on the gable of a house,' said Marie. 'In what street?'

'In the Rue Saint-Honoré, my jewel,' said the King, who seemed to have recovered himself, and who, as he recalled his ideas, wanted to give his mistress some notion of the scene that was about to take place here. 'As I crossed it in pursuit of some sport, my eyes were attracted by a bright light in a top window of the house inhabited by René, my mother's perfumer and glover—yours too, the whole Court's. I have strong suspicions as to what goes on in that man's house, and if I am poisoned that is where the poison is prepared.'

'I give him up to-morrow,' said Marie.

'What, you have still dealt with him since I left him?' said the King. 'My life was here,' he added gloomily, 'and here no doubt they have arranged for my death.'

'But, my dear boy, I have but just come home from Dauphiné with our Dauphin,' said she, with a smile, 'and I have bought nothing of René since the Queen of Navarre died.—Well, go on; you climbed up to René's roof——?'

'Yes,' the King went on. 'In a moment I, followed by Tavannes, had reached a spot whence, without being seen, I could see into the devil's kitchen, and note certain things which led me to take strong measures. Do you ever happen to have noticed the attics that crown that damned Florentine's house? All the windows to the street are constantly kept shut excepting the last, from which the Hôtel de Soissons can be seen, and the column my mother had erected for her astrologer Cosmo

Ruggieri. There is a room in this top story with a corridor lighted from the inner yard, so that in order to see what is being done within, a man must get to a perch which no one would ever think of climbing, the coping of a high wall which ends against the roof of René's house. The creatures who placed the alembics there to distil death, trusted to the faint hearts of the Parisians to escape inspection; but they counted without their Charles de Valois. I crept along the gutter, and supported myself against the window jamb with my arm round the neck of a monkey that is sculptured on it.'

'And what did you see, dear heart?' said Marie, in alarm.

'A low room where deeds of darkness are plotted,' replied the King. 'The first thing on which my eyes fell was a tall, old man seated in a chair, with a magnificent beard like old l'Hôpital's, and dressed, like him, in black velvet. The concentrated rays of a brightly burning lamp fell on his high forehead, deeply furrowed by hollow lines, on a crown of white hair and a calm, thoughtful face, pale with vigils and study. His attention was divided between a manuscript on parchment several centuries old, and two lighted stoves on which some heretical mixtures were cooking. Neither the floor nor the ceiling was visible; they were so covered with animals hung up there, skeletons, dried herbs, minerals, and drugs, with which the place was stuffed; here some books and retorts, with chests full of instruments for magic and astrology; there diagrams for horoscopes, phials, wax figures, and perhaps the poisons he concocts for René in payment for the shelter and hospitality bestowed on him by my mother's glover.

'Tavannes and I were startled, I can tell you, at the sight of this diabolical arsenal; for merely at the sight of it one feels spellbound, and but that my business is to be King of France, I should have been frightened. "Tremble for us both," said I to Tavannes.

'But Tavannes' eyes were riveted on the most mysterious object. On a couch by the old man's side lay a girl at full length, of the strangest beauty, as long and slender as a snake, as white as an ermine, as pale as death, as motionless as a statue. Perhaps it was a woman just dug out of her grave, for she seemed to be still wrapped in her shroud; her eyes were fixed, and I could not see her breathe. The old wretch paid no sort of heed to her. I watched him so curiously that his spirit I believe passed into me. By dint of studying him, at last I admired that searching eye, keen and bold, in spite of the chills of age; that mouth, mobile with thoughts that came from what seemed a single fixed desire, graven in a myriad wrinkles. Everything in the man spoke of a hope which nothing can discourage and nothing dismay. His attitude, motionless but full of thrilling life, his features so chiselled, so deeply cut by a passion that has done the work of the sculptor's tool, that mind dead-set on some criminal or scientific purpose, that searching intelligence on the track of Nature though conquered by her, and bent, without having broken, under the burden of an enterprise it will never give up, threatening creation with fire borrowed from itself—— I was fascinated for a moment.

'That old man was more a king than I, for his eye saw the whole world and was its master. I am determined to temper no more swords; I want to float over abysses, as that old man does; his science seems to me a sovereignty. In short, I believe in these occult sciences.'

'You, the eldest son, and the defender of the Holy Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church!' cried Marie.

'I.'

'Why, what has come over you? Go on; I will be frightened for you, and you shall be brave for me.'

'The old man looked at the clock and rose,' the King went on. 'He left the room, how I could not see, but

I heard him open the window towards the Rue Saint-Honoré. Presently a light shone out, and then I saw another light, answering to the old man's, by which we could perceive Cosmo Ruggieri on the top of the column.

'"Oh, ho! They understand each other," said I to Tavannes, who at once thought the whole affair highly suspicious, and was quite of my opinion that we should seize these two men, and at once make a search in their abominable workshop. But before proceeding to a raid, we wanted to see what would happen. By the end of a quarter of an hour the door of the laboratory opened, and Cosmo Ruggieri, my mother's adviser—the bottomless pit in which all the Court secrets are buried, of whom wives crave help against their husbands and their lovers, and husbands and lovers take counsel against faithless women, who gains money out of the past and the future, taking it from every one, who sells horoscopes, and is supposed to know everything,—that half-demon came in, saying to the old man, "Good evening, brother."

'He had with him a horrible little old woman, toothless, hunchbacked, crooked, and bent like a lady's marmoset, but far more hideous; she was wrinkled like a withered apple, her skin was of the colour of saffron, her chin met her nose, her mouth was a hardly visible slit, her eyes were like the black spots of the deuce on dice, her brow expressed a bitter temper, her hair fell in grey locks from under a dirty coif; she walked with a crutch; she stank of devilry and the stake; and she frightened us, for neither Tavannes nor I believed that she was a real woman; God never made one so horrible as she.

'She sat down on a stool by the side of the fair white serpent with whom Tavannes was falling in love.

'The two brothers paid no heed to either the old woman or the young one, who, side by side, formed a

horrible contrast. On one hand life in death, on the other death in life.'

'My sweet poet!' cried Marie, kissing the King.

'"Good evening, Cosmo," the old alchemist replied. And then both looked at the stove.—"What is the power of the moon to-night?" the old man asked Cosmo.—"Why, *caro Lorenzo*," my mother's astrologer replied, "the high tides of September are not yet over; it is impossible to read anything in the midst of such confusion."—"And what did the Orient say this evening?"—"He has just discovered," said Cosmo, "that there is a creative force in the air which gives back to the earth all it takes from it; he concludes, with us, that everything in this world is the outcome of a slow transformation, but all the various forms are of one and the same matter."—"That is what my predecessor thought," replied Lorenzo. "This morning Bernard Palissy was telling me that the metals are a result of compression, and that fire, which parts all things, joins all things also; fire has the power of compressing as well as that of diffusing. That worthy has a spark of genius in him."

'Though I was placed where I could not be seen, Cosmo went up to the dead girl, and taking her hand, he said, "There is some one near! Who is it?"—"The King," said she.

'I at once showed myself, knocking on the window-pane; Ruggieri opened the window, and I jumped into this wizard's kitchen, followed by Tavannes.

'"Yes, the King," said I to the two Florentines, who seemed terror-stricken. "In spite of your furnaces and books, your witches and your learning, you could not divine my visit.—I am delighted to see the famous Lorenzo Ruggieri, of whom the Queen my mother speaks with such mystery," said I to the old man, who rose and bowed.—"You are in this kingdom without my consent, my good man. Whom are you working for

here, you, who from father to son have dwelt in the heart of the House of the Medici? Listen to me. You have your hand in so many purses, that the most covetous would by this have had their fill of gold; you are far too cunning to plunge unadvisedly into criminal courses, but you ought not either to rush like feather-brains into this kitchen; you must have some secret schemes, you who are not content with gold or with power? Whom do you serve, God or the Devil? What are you concocting here? I insist on the whole truth. I am honest man enough to hear and keep the secret of your undertakings, however blameable they may be. So tell me everything without concealment. If you deceive me, you will be sternly dealt with. But Pagan or Christian, Calvinist or Mohammedan, you have my Royal word for it that you may leave the country unpunished, even if you have some peccadilloes to confess. At any rate, I give you the remainder of this night and to-morrow morning to examine your consciences, for you are my prisoners, and you must now follow me to a place where you will be guarded like a treasure."

'Before yielding to my authority, the two Florentines glanced at each other with a wily eye, and Lorenzo Ruggieri replied that I might be certain that no torture would wring their secrets from them; that in spite of their frail appearance, neither pain nor human feeling had any hold on them. Confidence alone could win from their lips what their mind had in its keeping. I was not to be surprised if at that moment they treated on an equal footing with a King who acknowledged no one above him but God, for that their ideas also came from God alone. Hence they demanded of me such confidence as they would grant. So, before pledging themselves to answer my questions without reserve, they desired me to place my left hand in the young girl's and my right hand in the old woman's. Not choosing to let them suppose that I feared any devilry, I put out my

hands. Lorenzo took the right and Cosmo the left, and each placed one in the hand of a woman, so there I was like Jesus Christ between the two thieves. All the time the two witches were studying my hands, Cosmo held a mirror before me, desiring me to look at myself, while his brother talked to the two women in an unknown tongue. Neither Tavannes nor I could catch the meaning of a single sentence.

'We set seals on every entrance to this laboratory before bringing away the men, and Tavannes undertook to keep guard till Bernard Palissy and Chapelain, my physician-in-chief, shall go there to make a close examination of all the drugs stored or made there. It was to hinder their knowing anything of the search going on in their kitchen, and to prevent their communicating with any one whatever outside—for they might have sent some message to my mother—that I brought these two demons to be shut up here with Solern's Germans to watch them, who are as good as the stoutest prison-walls. René himself is confined to his room under the eye of Solern's groom, and the two witches also And now, sweetheart, as I hold the key of the Cabala, the kings of Thunes, the chiefs of witchcraft, the princes of Bohemia, the masters of the future, the inheritors of all the famous soothsayers, I will read and know your heart, and at last we will know what is to become of us.'

'I shall be very glad if they can lay my heart bare,' said Marie, without showing the least alarm.

'I know why necromancers do not frighten you; you cast spells yourself.'

'Will you not have some of these peaches?' said she, offering him some fine fruit on a silver-gilt plate. 'Look at these grapes and pears; I went myself to gather them all at Vincennes.'

'Then I will eat some, for there can be no poison in them but the philters distilled from your fingers.'

'You ought to eat much fruit, Charles; it would

cool your blood, which you scorch by such violent living.'

'And ought I not to love you less too?'

'Perhaps——' said she. 'If what you love is bad for you,—and I have thought so—I should find power in my love to refuse to let you have it. I adore Charles far more than I love the King, and I want the man to live without the troubles that make him sad and anxious.'

'Royalty is destroying me.'

'It is so,' replied she. 'If you were only a poor prince like your brother-in-law the King of Navarre, that wretched debauchee who has not a sou or a stitch of his own, who has merely a poor little kingdom in Spain where he will never set foot, and Béarn in France, which yields him scarcely enough to live on, I should be happy, much happier than if I were really Queen of France.'

'But are you not much more than the Queen? King Charles is hers only for the benefit of the kingdom, for the Queen, after all, is part of our politics.'

Marie smiled with a pretty little pout, saying—

'We all know that, my liege.—And my sonnet—is it finished?'

'Dear child, it is as hard to write verses as to draw up an edict of pacification. I will finish them for you soon. Ah God! life sits lightly on me here, would I could never leave you!—But I must, nevertheless, examine the two Florentines. By all the sacred relics, I thought one Ruggieri quite enough in France, and behold there are two! Listen, my dearest heart, you have a good mother-wit, you would make a capital lieutenant of police, for you detect everything——'

'Well, Sire, we women take all we dread for granted, and to us what is probable is certain; there is all our subtlety in two words.'

'Well, then, help me to fathom these two men. At this moment every determination I may come to depends

on this examination. Are they innocent? Are they guilty?—Behind them stands my mother.'

'I hear Jacob on the winding stair,' said Marie.

Jacob was the King's favourite body servant, who accompanied him in all his amusements; he now came to ask whether his Master would wish to speak with the two prisoners.

At a nod of consent, the mistress of the house gave some orders.

'Jacob,' said she, 'make every one in the place leave the house, excepting the nurse and Monsieur le Dauphin d'Auvergne—they may stay. Do you remain in the room downstairs; but first of all shut the windows, draw the curtains, and light the candles.'

The King's impatience was so great that, while these preparations were being made, he came to take his place in a large settle, and his pretty mistress seated herself by his side in the nook of a wide, white marble chimney-place, where a bright fire blazed on the hearth. In the place of a mirror hung a portrait of the King, in a red velvet frame. Charles rested his elbow on the arm of the seat, to contemplate the two Italians at his ease.

The shutters shut, and the curtains drawn, Jacob lighted the candles in a sort of candelabrum of chased silver, placing it on a table at which the two Florentines took their stand—seeming to recognise the candlestick as the work of their fellow-townsman, Benvenuto Cellini. Then the effect of this rich room, decorated in the King's taste, was really brilliant. The russet tone of the tapestries looked better than by daylight. The furniture, elegantly carved, reflected the light of the candles and of the fire in its shining bosses. The gilding, judiciously introduced, sparkled here and there like eyes, and gave relief to the brown colouring that predominated in this nest for lovers.

Jacob knocked twice, and at a word brought in the two Florentines. Marie Touchet was immediately struck by

the grand presence which distinguished Lorenzo in the sight of great and small alike. This austere and venerable man, whose silver beard was relieved against an overcoat of black velvet, had a forehead like a marble dome. His severe countenance, with two black eyes that darted points of fire, inspired a thrill as of a genius emerged from the deepest solitude, and all the more impressive because its power was not dulled by contact with other men. It was as the steel of a blade that has not yet been used.

Cosmo Ruggieri wore the Court dress of the period. Marie nodded to the King, to show him that he had not exaggerated the picture, and to thank him for introducing her to this extraordinary man.

'I should have liked to see the witches too,' she whispered.

Charles IX., sunk again in brooding, made no reply; he was anxiously flipping off some crumbs of bread that happened to lie on his doublet and hose.

'Your science cannot work on the sky, nor compel the sun to shine, Messieurs de Florence,' said the King, pointing to the curtains which had been drawn to shut out the grey mist of Paris. 'There is no daylight.'

'Our science, Sire, enables us to make a sky as we will,' said Lorenzo Ruggieri. 'The weather is always fair for those who work in a laboratory by the light of a furnace.'

'That is true,' said the King.—'Well, Father,' said he, using a word he was accustomed to employ to old men, 'explain to us very clearly the object of your studies.'

'Who will guarantee us impunity?'

'The word of a King!' replied Charles, whose curiosity was greatly excited by this question.

Lorenzo Ruggieri seemed to hesitate, and Charles exclaimed—

'What checks you? we are alone.'

'Is the King of France here?' asked the old man.

Charles IX. reflected for a moment, then he replied, 'No.'

'But will he not come?' Lorenzo urged.

'No,' replied Charles, restraining an impulse of rage.

The imposing old man took a chair and sat down. Cosmo, amazed at his boldness, dared not imitate his brother.

Charles IX. said, with severe irony—

'The King is not here, Monsieur, but you are in the presence of a lady whose permission you ought to wait for.'

'The man you see before you, Madame,' said the grand old man, 'is as far above kings as kings are above their subjects, and you shall find me courteous, even when you know my power.'

Hearing these bold words, spoken with Italian emphasis, Charles and Marie looked at each other and then at Cosmo, who, with his eyes fixed on his brother, seemed to be asking himself, 'How will he get himself out of the awkward position we are in?'

In fact, one person only could appreciate the dignity and skill of Lorenzo Ruggieri's first move; not the King, nor his young mistress, over whom the elder man had cast the spell of his audacity, but his not less wily brother Cosmo. Though he was superior to the cleverest men at Court, and perhaps to his patroness Catherine de' Medici, the astrologer knew Lorenzo to be his master.

The learned old man, buried in solitude, had gauged the sovereigns of the earth, almost all of them wearied out by the perpetual shifting of politics; for at that time great crises were so sudden, so far reaching, so fierce, and so unexpected! He knew their satiety, their lassitude; he knew with what eagerness they pursued all that was new, strange, or uncommon; and, above all, how glad they were to rise now and then to intellectual regions so as to escape from the perpetual struggle with men and

things. To those who have exhausted politics, nothing remains but abstract thought; this Charles V. had proved by his abdication.

Charles IX., who made sonnets and swords to recreate himself after the absorbing business of an age when the Throne was in not less ill-odour than the King, and when Royalty had only its cares and none of its pleasures, could not but be strangely startled by Lorenzo's audacious negation of his power. Religious impiety had ceased to be surprising at a time when Catholicism was closely inquired into; but the subversion of all religion, assumed as a groundwork for the wild speculations of mystical arts, naturally amazed the King, and roused him from his gloomy absence of mind. Besides, a victory to be won over mankind was an undertaking which would make every other interest seem trivial in the eyes of the Ruggieri. An important debt to be paid depended on this idea to be suggested to the King; the brothers could not ask for this, and yet they must obtain it. The first thing was to make Charles IX. forget his suspicions by making him jump at some new idea.

The two Italians knew full well that in this strange game their lives were at stake; and the glances—deferent but proud—that they exchanged with Marie and the King, whose looks were keen and suspicious, were a drama in themselves.

'Sire,' said Lorenzo Ruggieri, 'you have asked for the truth. But to show her to you naked, I must bid you sound the well, the pit, from which she will rise. I pray you let the gentleman, the poet, forgive us for saying what the Eldest Son of the Church may regard as blasphemy—I do not believe that God troubles Himself about human affairs.'

Though fully resolved to preserve his sovereign indifference, Charles IX. could not control a gesture of surprise.

'But for that conviction, I should have no faith in the

miraculous work to which I have devoted myself. But, to carry it out, I must believe it; and if the hand of God rules all things, I am a madman. So, be it known to the King, we aim at winning a victory over the immediate course of human nature.

'I am an alchemist, Sire; but do not suppose, with the vulgar, that I am striving to make gold. The composition of gold is not the end, but only an incident of our researches; else we should not call our undertaking *Magnum Opus*, the great work. The Great Work is something far more ambitious than that. If I, at this day, could recognise the presence of God in matter, the fire of the furnaces that have been burning for centuries would be extinguished to-morrow at my bidding.

'But make no mistake—to deny the direct interference of God is not to deny God. We place the Creator of all things far above the level to which religions reduce Him. Those who hope for immortality are not to be accused of Atheism. Following the example of Lucifer, we are jealous of God, and jealousy is a proof of violent love. Though this doctrine lies at the root of our labours, all adepts do not accept it. Cosmo,' said the old man, indicating his brother, 'Cosmo is devout; he pays for masses for the repose of our father's soul, and he goes to hear them. Your mother's astrologer believes in the Divinity of Christ, in the Immaculate Conception, and in Transubstantiation; he believes in the Pope's indulgences, and in hell—he believes in an infinite number of things.—His hour is not yet come, for I have read his horoscope; he will live to be nearly a hundred. He will live through two reigns, and see two kings of France assassinated——'

'Who will be——?' asked the King.

'The last of the Valois and the first of the Bourbons,' replied Lorenzo. 'But Cosmo will come to my way of thinking. In fact, it is impossible to be an alchemist and

a Catholic; to believe in the dominion of man over matter, and in the supreme power of mind.'

'Cosmo will live to be a hundred?' said the King, knitting his brows in the terrible way that was his wont.

'Yes, Sire,' said Lorenzo decisively. 'He will die peacefully in his bed.'

'If it is in your power to predict the moment of your death, how can you be ignorant of the result of your inquiries?' asked the King. And he smiled triumphantly as he looked at Marie Touchet.

The brothers exchanged a swift look of satisfaction.

'He is interested in alchemy,' thought they, 'so we are safe.'

'Our prognostics are based on the existing relations of man to nature; but the very point we aim at is the complete alteration of those relations,' replied Lorenzo.

The King sat thinking.

'But if you are sure that you must die, you are assured of defeat,' said Charles IX.

'As our predecessors were,' replied Lorenzo, lifting his hand and letting it drop with a solemn and emphatic gesture, as dignified as his thoughts. 'But your mind has rushed on to the goal of our attempts, Sire; we must come back again, Sire! Unless you know the ground on which our edifice is erected, you may persist in saying that it will fall, and judge this science, which has been pursued for centuries by the greatest minds, as the vulgar judge it.'

The King bowed assent.

'I believe, then, that this earth belongs to man, that he is master of it, and may appropriate all the forces, all the elements thereof. Man is not a creature proceeding directly from the hand of God, but the result of the principle diffused throughout the infinite Ether, wherein myriads of beings are produced; and these have no resemblance to each other between star and star, because

the conditions of life are everywhere different. Ay, my Liege, the motion we call life has its source beyond all visible worlds; creation draws from it as the surrounding conditions may require, and the minutest beings share in it by taking all they are able, at their own risk and peril; it is their part to defend themselves from death. This is the sum-total of alchemy.

'If man, the most perfect animal on this globe, had within him a fraction of the Godhead, he could not perish — but he does perish. To escape from this dilemma, Socrates and his school invented the soul. I—the successor of the great unknown kings who have ruled this science—I am for the old theories against the new; I believe in the transmutation of matter which I can see, as against the eternity of a soul which I cannot see. I do not acknowledge the world of souls. If such a world existed, the substances of which the beautiful combination, produces your body—and which in Madame are so dazzling—would not separate and resolve themselves after your death to return each to its own place; the water to water, the fire to fire, the metal to metal, just as when my charcoal is burnt its elements are restored to their original molecules.

'Though you say that something lives on, it is not we ourselves; all that constitutes our living self perishes.

'Now, it is my living self that I desire to perpetuate beyond the common term of life; it is the present manifestation for which I want to secure longer duration. What! trees live for centuries, and men shall live but for years, while those are passive and we are active; while they are motionless and speechless, and we walk and talk! No creature on earth ought to be superior to us either in power or permanency. We have already expanded our senses; we can see into the stars. We ought to be able to extend our life. I place life above power. Of what use is power if life slips from us?

'A rational man ought to have no occupation but that of seeking—not whether there is another life—but the secret on which our present life is based, so as to be able to prolong it at will!—This is the desire that has silvered my hair. But I walk on boldly in the darkness, leading to battle those intellects which share my faith. Life will some day be ours.'

'But how?' cried the King, starting to his feet.

'The first condition of our faith is the belief that this world is for man; you must grant me that,' said Lorenzo.

'Well and good, so be it!' said Charles de Valois, impatient, but already fascinated.

'Well, then, Sire, if we remove God from this world, what is left but man? Now let us survey our domain. The material world is composed of elements; those elements have a first principle within them. All these principles resolve themselves into one which is gifted with motion. The number Three is the formula of creation: Matter, Motion, Production!'

'Proof, proof? Pause there!' cried the King.

'Do you not see the effects?' replied Lorenzo. 'We have analysed in our crucibles the acorn from which an oak would have arisen as well as the embryo which would have become a man; from these small masses of matter a pure element was derived to which some force, some motion would have been added. In the absence of a Creator, must not that first principle be able to assume the external forms which constitute our world? For the phenomena of life are everywhere the same. Yes, in metals as in living beings, in plants as in man, life begins by an imperceptible embryo which develops spontaneously. There is a first principle! We must detect it at the point where it acts on itself, where it is one, where it is a Principle before it is a Creature, a cause before it is an effect; then we shall see it Absolute—formless, but capable of assuming all the forms we see it take.

'When we are face to face with this particle or atom, and have detected its motion from the starting-point, we shall know its laws; we are thenceforth its masters, and able to impose on it the form we may choose, among all we see; we shall possess gold, having the world, and can give ourselves centuries of life to enjoy our wealth. That is what we seek, my disciples and I. All our powers, all our thoughts are directed to that search; nothing diverts us from it. One hour wasted on any other passion would be stolen from our greatness! You have never found one of your hunting-dogs neglectful of the game or the death, and I have never known one of my persevering subjects diverted by a woman or a thought of greed.

'If the adept craves for gold and power, that hunger comes of our necessities; he clutches at fortune as a thirsty hound snatches a moment from the chase to drink, because his retorts demand a diamond to consume, or ingots to be reduced to powder. Each one has his line of work. This one seeks the secret of vegetable nature, he studies the torpid life of plants, he notes the parity of motion in every species and the parity of nutrition; in every case he discerns that sun, air, and water are needed for fertility and nourishment. Another investigates the blood of animals. A third studies the laws of motion generally and its relation to the orbits of the stars. Almost all love to struggle with the intractable nature of metals; for though we find various elements in everything, we always find metals the same throughout, down to their minutest particles.

'Hence the common error as to our labours. Do you see all these patient toilers, these indefatigable athletes, always vanquished, and always returning to the assault? Humanity, Sire, is at our heels, as your huntsman is at the heels of the pack. It cries to us, "Hurry on! Overlook nothing! Sacrifice everything, even a man

—you who sacrifice yourselves! Hurry onward! Cut off the head and hands of Death, my foe!"

'Yes, Sire, we are animated by a sentiment on which the happiness depends of generations to come. We have buried many men—and what men!—who have died in the pursuit. When we set foot on that road it is not to work for ourselves: we may perish without discovering the secret. And what a death is that of a man who does not believe in a future life! We are glorious martyrs; we bear the selfishness of the whole race in our hearts; we live in our successors. On our way we discover secrets which enrich the mechanical and liberal arts. Our furnaces shed gleams of light which help society to possess more perfect forms of industry. Gunpowder was discovered in our retorts; we shall conquer the thunder yet. Our patient vigils may overthrow politics.'

'Can that be possible!' cried the King, sitting up again on the settle.

'Why not?' replied the Grand Master of the New Templars. *Tradidit mundum disputationibus!* God has given us the world. Listen to this once again! Man is lord on earth, and matter is his. Every means, every power is at his service. What created us? A motion. What power keeps life in us? A motion? And should not science grasp this motion? Nothing on earth is lost, nothing flies off from our planet to go elsewhere; if it were so, the stars would fall on one another. The waters of the Deluge are all here, and not a drop lost. Around us, above, below, are the elements whence have proceeded the innumerable millions of men who have trodden the earth, before and since the Deluge. What is it that remains to be done? To detect the disintegrating force; on the other hand, to discover the combining force. We are the outcome of a visible toil. When the waters covered our globe, men came forth from them who found the elements of life in the earth's

covering, in the atmosphere, and in food. Earth and air, then, contain the first principle of human transformations; these go on under our eyes, by the agency of what is under our eyes; hence we can discover the secret by not confining our efforts to the span of one man's life, but making the task endure as long as mankind itself. We have, in fact, attacked matter as a whole; Matter, in which I believe, and which I, Grand Master of our Order, am bent on penetrating.

'Christopher Columbus gave a world to the King of Spain; I am seeking to give the King of France a people that shall never die.—I, an outpost on the remotest frontier which cuts us off from the knowledge of things, a patient student of atoms, I destroy forms, I dissolve the bonds of every combination, I imitate Death to enable me to imitate Life. In short, I knock incessantly at the door of Creation, and shall still knock till my latest day. When I die, my knocker will pass into other hands not less indefatigable, as unknown giants bequeathed it to me.

'Fabulous images, never understood, such as those of Prometheus, of Ixion, of Adonis, of Pan, etc., which are part of the religious beliefs of every people and in every age, show us that this hope had its birth with the human race. Chaldæa, India, Persia, Egypt, Greece, and the Moors have transmitted Magian lore, the highest of all the occult sciences, the storehouse of the results of generations of watchers. Therein lay the bond of the noble and majestic Order of the Temple. When he burned the Templars, a predecessor of yours, Sire, only burned men; their secrets remain with us. The reconstruction of the Temple is the watchword of an unrecognised people, a race of intrepid seekers, all looking to the Orient of life, all brethren, all inseparable, united by an idea, stamped with the seal of toil. I am the sovereign of this people, their chief by election and not by birth. I guide them all towards the essence of life! Grand Master, Rosicrucians, companions, adepts,

we all pursue the invisible molecule which escapes our crucibles, and still evades our sight; but we shall make ourselves eyes manifold more powerful than those bestowed on us by nature; we shall get to the primitive atom, the corpuscular element so perseveringly sought by all the sages who have preceded us in the sublime pursuit.

'Sire, when a man stands astride on that abyss, and has at his command divers so intrepid as my brethren, other human interests look very small; hence we are not dangerous. Religious disputes and political struggles are far from us; we are immeasurably beyond them. Those who contend with nature do not condescend to take men by the throat.

'Moreover, every result in our science is appreciable; we can measure every effect, we can predict it, whereas in the combinations which include men and their interests everything is unstable. We shall submit the diamond to our crucible; we shall make diamonds; we shall make gold! Like one of our craft at Barcelona, we shall make ships move by the help of a little water and fire. We shall dispense with the wind, nay, we shall make the wind, we shall make light and renew the face of empires by new industries!—But we will never stoop to mount a throne to be *gehennaed* by nations.'

Notwithstanding his desire to avoid being entrapped by Florentine cunning, the King, as well as his simple-minded mistress, was by this time caught and carried away in the rhetoric and rhodomontade of this pompous and specious flow of words. The lovers' eyes betrayed how much they were dazzled by the vision of mysterious riches spread out before them; they saw, as it were, subterranean caverns in long perspective full of toiling gnomes. The impatience of curiosity dissipated the alarms of suspicion.

'But, then,' exclaimed the King, 'you are great politicians, and can enlighten us.'

'No, Sire,' said Lorenzo simply.

'Why not?' asked the King.

'Sire, it is given to no one to be able to predict what will come of a concourse of some thousands of men; we may be able to tell what one man will do, how long he will live, and whether he will be lucky or unlucky; but we cannot tell how several wills thrown together will act, and any calculation of the swing of their interests is even more difficult, for interests are men *plus* things; only in solitude can we discern the general aspect of the future. The Protestantism that is devouring you will be devoured in its turn by its practical outcome, which, in its day, will become a theory too. Europe, so far, has not gone further than religion; to-morrow it will attack Royalty.'

'Then the night of Saint-Bartholomew was a great conception?'

'Yes, Sire; for when the people triumph, they will have their Saint-Bartholomew. When Religion and Royalty are swept away, the people will attack the great, and after the great they will fall upon the rich. Finally, when Europe is no more than a dismembered herd of men for lack of leaders, it will be swallowed up by vulgar conquerors. The world has presented a similar spectacle twenty times before, and Europe is beginning again. Ideas devour the ages as men are devoured by their passions. When man is cured, human nature will cure itself perhaps. Science is the soul of mankind, and we are its pontiffs; and those who study the soul care but little for the body.'

'How far have you gone?' asked the King.

'We move but slowly; but we never lose what we have once conquered.'

'So you, in fact, are the King of the Wizards,' said Charles IX., piqued at finding himself so small a personage in the presence of this man.

The imposing Grand Master of Adepts flashed a look at him that left him thunder-stricken.

'You are the King of men,' replied he; 'I am the King of ideas. Besides, if there were real wizards, you could not have burnt them!' he added, with a touch of irony. 'We too have our martyrs.'

'But by what means,' the King went on, 'do you cast nativities? How did you know that the man near your window last night was the King of France? What power enabled one of your race to foretell to my mother the fate of her three sons? Can you, the Grand Master of the Order that would fain knead the world,—can you, I say, tell me what the Queen my mother is thinking at this moment?'

'Yes, Sire.'

The answer was spoken before Cosmo could pull his brother's coat to warn him.

'You know why my brother, the King of Poland, is returning home?'

'Yes, Sire.'

'And why?'

'To take your place.'

'Our bitterest enemies are our own kith and kin,' cried the King, starting up in a fury, and striding up and down the room. 'Kings have no brothers, no sons, no mother! Coligny was right; my executioners are in the conventicles, they are at the Louvre. You are either impostors or regicides!—Jacob, call in Solern.'

'My Lord,' said Marie Touchet, 'the Ruggieri have your word of honour. You have chosen to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge; do not complain of its bitterness.'

The King smiled with an expression of deep contempt; his material sovereignty seemed small in his eyes in comparison with the supreme intellectual sovereignty of old Lorenzo Ruggieri. Charles IX. could scarcely govern France; the Grand Master of the

Rosicrucians commanded an intelligent and submissive people.

'Be frank; I give you my word as a gentleman that your reply, even if it should contain the avowal of the worst crimes, shall be as though it had never been spoken,' the King said. 'Do you study poisons?'

'To know what will secure life, it is needful to know what will cause death.'

'You have the secret of many poisons?'

'Yes, but in theory only, and not in practice; we know them, but do not use them.'

'Has my mother asked for any?'

'The Queen-mother, Sire, is far too clever to have recourse to such means. She knows that the sovereign who uses poison shall perish by poison; the Borgias, and Bianca, Grand Duchess of Tuscany, are celebrated examples of the dangers incurred by those who use such odious means. At Court everything is known. You can kill a poor wretch outright; of what use, then, is it to poison him? But if you attempt the life of conspicuous persons, what chance is there of secrecy? Nobody could have fired at Coligny but you, or the Queen-mother, or one of the Guises. No one made any mistake about that. Take my word for it, in politics poison cannot be used twice with impunity; princes always have successors.

'As to smaller men, if, like Luther, they become sovereigns by the power of ideas, by killing them you do not kill their doctrine.—The Queen is a Florentine; she knows that poison can only be the instrument of private vengeance. My brother, who has never left her since she came to France, knows how deeply Madame Diane aggrieved her; she never thought of poisoning her, and she could have done so. What would the King your father have said? No woman would have been more thoroughly justified, or more certain of impunity. But Madame de Valentinois is alive to this day.'

'And the magic of wax images?' asked the King.

'Sire,' said Cosmo, 'those figures are so entirely innocuous that we lend ourselves to such magic to satisfy blind passions, like physicians who give bread pills to persons who fancy themselves sick. A desperate woman imagines that by stabbing the heart of an image she brings disaster on the faithless lover it represents. What can we say? These are our taxes.'

'The Pope sells indulgences,' said Lorenzo Ruggieri, smiling.

'Does my mother make use of such images?'

'Of what use would such futile means be to her who can do what she will?'

'Could Queen Catherine save you at this moment?' asked Charles ominously.

'We are in no danger, Sire,' said Lorenzo calmly. 'I knew before I entered this house that I should leave it safe and sound, as surely as I know the ill-feeling that the King will bear my brother a few days hence; but, even if he should run some risk, he will triumph. Though the King reigns by the sword, he also reigns by justice,' he added, in allusion to the famous motto on a medal struck for Charles IX.

'You know everything; I shall die before long, and that is well,' returned the King, hiding his wrath under feverish impatience. 'But how will my brother die, who, according to you, is to be Henri III.?'

'A violent death.'

'And Monsieur d'Alençon?'

'He will never reign.'

'Then Henri de Bourbon will be King?'

'Yes, Sire.'

'And what death will he die?'

'A violent death.'

'And when I am dead, what will become of Madame?' asked the King, turning to Marie Touchet.

'Madame de Belleville will marry, Sire.'

'You are impostors!—Send them away, my Lord,' said Marie Touchet.

'Dear heart, the Ruggieri have my word as a gentleman,' said Charles, smiling. 'Will Marie have children?'

'Yes—and Madame will live to be more than eighty.'

'Must I have them hanged?' said the King to his mistress.—'And my son, the Comte d'Auvergne?' said Charles, rising to fetch the child.

'Why did you tell him that I should marry?' said Marie Touchet to the two brothers during the few moments when they were alone.

'Madame,' replied Lorenzo with dignity, 'the King required us to tell the truth, and we told it.'

'Then it is true?' said she.

'As true as that the Governor of Orleans loves you to distraction.'

'But I do not love him,' cried she.

'That is true, Madame,' said Lorenzo. 'But your horoscope shows that you are to marry the man who at this present loves you.'

'Could you not tell a little lie for my sake?' said she with a smile. 'For if the King should believe your forecast——'

'Is it not necessary that he should believe in our innocence?' said Cosmo, with a glance full of meaning. 'The precautions taken by the King against us have given us reason, during the time we spent in your pretty gaol, to suppose that the occult sciences must have been maligned in his ears.'

'Be quite easy,' replied Marie; 'I know him, and his doubts are dispelled.'

'We are innocent,' said the old man haughtily.

'So much the better; for at this moment the King is having your laboratory searched and your crucibles and phials examined by experts.'

The brothers looked at each other and smiled.

Marie took this smile for the irony of innocence ; but it meant : 'Poor simpletons ! Do you suppose that if we know how to prepare poisons, we do not also know how to conceal them ?'

'Where are the King's people, then ?' asked Cosmo.

'In René's house,' replied Marie ; and the Ruggier exchanged a glance which conveyed from each to each the same thought, 'The Hotel de Soissons is inviolable !'

The King had so completely thrown off his suspicions, that when he went to fetch his son, and Jacob intercepted him to give him a note written by Chapelain, he opened it in the certainty of finding in it what his physician told him concerning his visit to the laboratory, where all that had been discovered bore solely on alchemy.

'Will he live happy ?' asked the King, showing his infant son to the two alchemists.

'This is Cosmo's concern,' said Lorenzo, turning to his brother.

Cosmo took the child's little hand and studied it carefully.

'Monsieur,' said Charles IX. to the elder man, 'if you are compelled to deny the existence of the spirit to believe that your enterprise is possible, tell me how it is that you can doubt that which constitutes your power. The mind you desire to annihilate is the torch that illumines your search. Ah, ha ! Is not that moving while denying the fact of motion ?' cried he, and pleased at having hit on this argument, he looked triumphantly at his mistress.

'Mind,' said Lorenzo Ruggieri, 'is the exercise of an internal sense, just as the faculty of seeing various objects and appreciating their form and colour is the exercise of our sight. That has nothing to do with what is assumed as to another life. Mind—thought—is a faculty which

may cease even during life with the forces that produce it.'

'You are logical,' said the King with surprise. 'But alchemy is an atheistical science.'

'Materialist, Sire, which is quite a different thing. Materialism is the outcome of the Indian doctrines transmitted through the mysteries of Isis to Chaldæa and Egypt, and brought back to Greece by Pythagoras, one of the demi-gods among men; his doctrine of transmigration is the mathematics of materialism, the living law of its phases. Each of the different creations which make up the earthly creation possesses the power of retarding the impulse that drags it into another form.'

'Then alchemy is the science of sciences!' cried Charles IX., fired with enthusiasm. 'I must see you at work.'

'As often as you will, Sire. You cannot be more eager than the Queen your mother.'

'Ah! That is why she is so much attached to you!' cried the King.

'The House of Medici has secretly encouraged our research for almost a century past.'

'Sire,' said Cosmo, 'this child will live nearly a hundred years; he will meet with some checks, but will be happy and honoured, having in his veins the blood of the Valois.'

'I will go to see you,' said the King, who had recovered his good humour. 'You can go.'

The brothers bowed to Marie and Charles IX. and withdrew. They solemnly descended the stairs, neither looking at each other nor speaking; they did not even turn to look up at the windows from the courtyard, so sure were they that the King's eye was on them; and, in fact, as they turned to pass through the gate, they saw Charles IX. at a window.

As soon as the alchemist and the astrologer were in the Rue de l'Autruche, they cast a look in front and behind to

see that no one was either following them or waiting for them, and went on as far as the Louvre moat without speaking a word; but there, finding that they were alone, Lorenzo said to Cosmo in the Florentine Italian of the time—

'*Affè d'Iddio! como le abbiamo infinocchiato!*' (By God, we have caught them finely!)

'*Gran mercés! a lui sta di spartojarsi*'—(Much good may it do him; he must make what he can of it)—said Cosmo. 'May the Queen do as much for me! We have done a good stroke for her.'

Some days after this scene, which had struck Marie Touchet no less than the King, in one of those moments when in the fulness of joy the mind is in some sort released from the body, Marie exclaimed—

'Charles, I understand Lorenzo Ruggieri; but Cosmo said nothing.'

'That is true,' said the King, startled by this sudden flash of light, 'and there was as much falsehood as truth in what they said. Those Italians are as slippery as the silk they spin.'

This suspicion explains the hatred of Cosmo that the King betrayed on the occasion of the trial on the conspiracy of la Mole and Coconnas. When he found that Cosmo was one of the contrivers of that plot, the King believed himself duped by the two Italians; for it proved to him that his mother's astrologer did not devote himself exclusively to studying the stars, fulminating powder and final atoms. Lorenzo had then left the country.

In spite of many persons' incredulity of such things, the events which followed this scene confirmed the prophecies uttered by the Ruggieri.

The King died three months later. The Comte de Gondi followed Charles IX. to the tomb, as he had been told that he would by his brother, the Maréchal de

Retz, a friend of the Ruggieri, and a believer in their foresight.

Marie Touchet married Charles de Balzac, Marquis d'Entragues, Governor of Orleans, by whom she had two daughters. The more famous of these two, the Comte d'Auvergne's half-sister, was Henri IV.'s mistress, and at the time of Biron's conspiracy tried to place her brother on the throne of France and oust the Bourbons.

The Comte d'Auvergne, made Duc d'Angoulême, lived till the reign of Louis XIV. He coined money in his province, altering the superscription; but Louis XIV. did not interfere, so great was his respect for the blood of the Valois.

Cosmo lived till after the accession of Louis XIII.; he saw the fall of the House of Medici in France, and the overthrow of the Concini. History has taken care to record that he died an atheist—that is to say, a materialist.

The Marquise d'Entragues was more than eighty when she died.

Lorenzo and Cosmo had for their disciple the famous Comte de Saint-Germain, who became notorious under Louis XV. The great alchemist was not less than a hundred and thirty years old, the age to which some biographers say Marion Delorme attained. The Count may have heard from the Ruggieri anecdotes of the Massacre of Saint-Bartholomew and of the reigns of the Valois, in which they could at pleasure assume a part by speaking in the first person. The Comte de Saint-Germain is the last professor of alchemy who explained the science well, but he left no writings. The doctrine of the Cabala set forth in this volume was derived from that mysterious personage.

It is a strange thing! Three men's lives, that of the old man from whom this information was obtained, that of the Comte de Saint-Germain, and that of Cosmo Ruggieri, embrace European history from the reign of

Francis I. to that of Napoleon. Only fifty lives of equal length would cover the time to as far back as the first known epoch of the world.—'What are fifty generations for studying the mysteries of life?' the Comte de Saint-Germain used to say.

PARIS, *November-December* 1836.

PART III

THE TWO DREAMS

In 1786 Bodard de Saint-James, treasurer to the Navy, was of all the financiers of Paris the one whose luxury gave rise to most remark and gossip. At that time he was building his famous *Folly* at Neuilly, and his wife bought, to crown the tester of her bed, a plume of feathers of which the price had dismayed the Queen. It was far easier then than now to make oneself the fashion and be talked of by all Paris; a witticism was often quite enough, or the caprice of a woman.

Bodard lived in the fine house in the Place Vendôme which the farmer-general Dangé had not long since been compelled to quit. This notorious Epicurean was lately dead; and on the day when he was buried, Monsieur de Bièvre, his intimate friend, had found matter for a jest, saying that now one could cross the Place Vendôme without danger (or Dangé). This allusion to the terrific gambling that went on in the deceased man's house was his funeral oration. The house is that opposite to the Chancellerie.

To complete Bodard's history as briefly as possible, he was a poor creature, he failed for fourteen millions of francs after the Prince de Guéménée. His clumsiness in not anticipating that Serene bankruptcy—to use an expression of Lebrun-Pindare's—led to his never even being mentioned. He died in a garret, like Bourvalais, Bouret, and many others.

Madame de Saint-James indulged an ambition of

never receiving any but people of quality—a stale absurdity that is ever new. To her the cap of a lawyer in the Parlement was but a small affair; she wanted to see her rooms filled with persons of title who had at least the minor privileges of *entrée* at Versailles. To say that many blue ribbons were to be seen in the lady's house would be untrue; but it is quite certain that she had succeeded in winning the civility and attention of some members of the Rohan family, as was proved subsequently in the too famous case of the Queen's necklace.

One evening—it was, I believe, in August 1786—I was greatly surprised to see in this millionaire's room, precise as she was in the matter of proofs of rank, two new faces, which struck me as being of decidedly inferior birth.

She came up to me as I stood in a window recess, where I had intentionally ensconced myself.

'Do tell me,' said I, with a questioning glance at one of these strangers, 'who is that specimen? How did he get into your house?'

'He is a charming man.'

'Do you see him through the prism of love, or am I mistaken in him?'

'You are not mistaken,' she replied, laughing; 'he is as ugly as a toad; but he has done me the greatest service a woman can accept from a man.'

As I looked at her with mischievous meaning, she hastened to add—'He has entirely cured me of the ugly red patches which spoilt my complexion and made me look like a peasant woman.'

I shrugged my shoulders with disgust.

'A quack!' I exclaimed.

'No,' said she, 'he is a physician to the Court pages. He is clever and amusing, I assure you; and he has written books too. He is a very learned physicist.'

'If his literary style is like his face!——' said I, smiling. 'And the other?'

'What other?'

'That little prim man, as neat as a doll, and who looks as if he drank verjuice.'

'He is a man of good family,' said she. 'He has come from some province—I forget which.—Ah! yes, from Artois. He is in Paris to wind up some affair that concerns the Cardinal, and His Eminence has just introduced him to Monsieur de Saint-James. They have agreed in choosing Monsieur de Saint-James to be arbitrator. In that the gentleman from the provinces has not shown much wisdom. What are people thinking of when they place a case in that man's hands? He is as gentle as a lamb, and as shy as a girl. His Eminence is most kind to him.'

'What is it about?' said I.

'Three hundred thousand livres,' said she.

'What! a lawyer?' I asked, with a little start of astonishment.

'Yes,' replied she.

And, somewhat disturbed by having to make this humiliating confession, Madame Bodard returned to her game of faro.

Every table was made up. I had nothing to do or to say. I had just lost two thousand crowns to Monsieur de Laval, whom I had met in a courtesan's drawing-room. I went to take a seat in a deep chair near the fire. If ever on this earth there was an astonished man, it certainly was I on discovering that my opposite neighbour was the Controller-General. Monsieur de Calonne seemed to be drowsy, or else he was absorbed in one of those brown studies which come over a statesman. When I pointed out the Minister to Beaumarchais, who came to speak to me, the creator of *Figaro* explained the mystery without speaking a word. He pointed first to my head and then to Bodard's in an ingeniously significant way, by directing his thumb to one and his little finger to the other, with the rest of the fingers closed.

My first impulse was to go and say something sharp to Calonne, but I sat still; in the first place, because I intended to play the favourite a trick, and also because Beaumarchais had somewhat familiarly seized my hand.

'What is it, Monsieur?' said I.

With a wink he indicated the Minister.

'Do not wake him,' he said in a low tone; 'we may be only too thankful when he sleeps.'

'But even sleeping is a scheme of finance,' said I.

'Certainly it is,' replied the statesman, who had read our words by the mere motion of our lips. 'And would to God we could sleep a long time; there would not be such an awakening as you will see!'

'Monseigneur,' said the play-writer, 'I owe you some thanks.'

'What for?'

'Monsieur de Mirabeau is gone to Berlin. I do not know whether in this matter of the Waters we may not both be drowned.'

'You have too much memory and too little gratitude,' replied the Minister drily, vexed at this betrayal of one of his secrets before me.

'Very possibly,' said Beaumarchais, greatly nettled. 'But I have certain millions which may square many accounts.' Calonne affected not to have heard.

It was half-past twelve before the card-tables broke up. Then we sat down to supper—ten of us: Bodard and his wife, the Controller-General, Beaumarchais, the two strangers, two pretty women whose names may not be mentioned, and a farmer-general named, I think, Lavoisier. Of thirty persons whom I had found on entering the drawing-room but these ten remained. And the two 'specimens' would only stay to supper on the pressing invitation of the lady of the house, who thought she could discharge her debt to one by giving him a meal, and asked the other perhaps to please her husband, to whom she was doing the civil—wherefore I

know not. Monsieur de Calonne was a power, and if any one had cause to be annoyed it would have been I.

The supper was at first deadly dull. The two men and the farmer-general weighed on us. I signed to Beaumarchais to make the son of Esculapius, by whom he was sitting, drink till he was tipsy, giving him to understand that I would deal with the lawyer. As this was the only kind of amusement open to us, and as it gave promise of some blundering impertinence on the part of the two strangers, which amused us by anticipation, Monsieur de Calonne smiled on the scheme. In two seconds the ladies had entered into our Bacchic plot. By significant glances they expressed their readiness to play their part, and the wine of Sillery crowned our glasses again and again with silvery foam. The surgeon was easy enough to deal with; but as I was about to pour out my neighbour's second glass, he told me with the cold politeness of a money-lender that he would drink no more.

At this time, by what chance I know not, Madame de Saint-James had turned the conversation on the wonderful suppers to the Comte de Cagliostro, given by the Cardinal de Rohan. My attention was not too keenly alive to what the mistress of the house was saying; for since her reply I had watched, with invincible curiosity, my neighbour's pinched, thin face, of which the principal feature was a nose at once wide and sharp, which made him at times look very like a ferret. Suddenly his cheeks flushed as he heard Madame de Saint-James disputing with Monsieur de Calonne.

'But I assure you, Monsieur,' said she in a positive tone, 'that I have seen Queen Cleopatra.'

'I believe it, Madame,' said my neighbour. 'I have spoken to Catherine de' Medici.'

'Oh! oh!' said Monsieur de Calonne.

The words spoken by the little provincial had an indescribably sonorous tone—to use a word borrowed

from physical science. This sudden clearness of enunciation, from a man who till now had spoken very little and very low, in the best possible taste, surprised us in the highest degree.

'Why, he is talking!' exclaimed the surgeon, whom Beaumarchais had worked up to a satisfactory condition.

'His neighbour must have touched a spring,' replied the satirist.

Our man coloured a little as he heard these words, though they were spoken in a murmur.

'And what was the late lamented Queen like?' asked Calonne.

'I will not assert that the person with whom I supped last night was Catherine de' Medici herself; such a miracle must seem as impossible to a Christian as to a philosopher,' replied the lawyer, resting his finger-tips lightly on the table, and leaning back in his chair as if preparing to speak at some length. 'But, at any rate, I can swear that that woman was as like to Catherine de' Medici as though they had been sisters. The lady I saw wore a black velvet dress, absolutely like that which the Queen is wearing in the portrait belonging to the King; on her head was the characteristic black velvet cap; her complexion was colourless, and her face the face you know. I could not help expressing my surprise to His Eminence. The suddenness of the apparition was all the more wonderful because Monsieur le Comte de Cagliostro could not guess the name of the personage in whose company I wished to be. I was utterly amazed. The magical spectacle of a supper where such illustrious women of the past were the guests robbed me of my presence of mind. When, at about midnight, I got away from this scene of witchcraft, I almost doubted my own identity.

'But all these marvels seemed quite natural by comparison with the strange hallucination under which I was presently to fall. I know not what words I can

use to describe the condition of my senses. But I can declare, in all sincerity of heart, that I no longer wonder that there should have been, of old, spirits weak enough —or strong enough—to believe in the mysteries of magic and the power of the Devil. For my part, till I have ampler information, I regard the apparitions of which Cardan and certain other thaumaturgists have spoken as quite possible.'

These words, pronounced with incredible eloquence of tone, were of a nature to rouse extreme curiosity in those present. Our looks all centred on the orator, and we sat motionless. Our eyes alone showed life as they reflected the bright wax lights in the candlesticks. By dint of watching the stranger, we fancied we could see an emanation from the pores of his face, and especially from those of his brow, of the inner feelings that wholly possessed him. This man, apparently so cold and strictly reserved, seemed to have within him a hidden fire, of which the flame came forth to us.

'I know not,' he went on, 'whether the figure I had seen called up made itself invisible to follow me; but as soon as I had laid my head on my pillow, I saw the grand shade of Catherine rise before me. I instinctively felt myself in a luminous sphere; for my eyes, attracted to the Queen with painful fixity, saw her alone. Suddenly she bent over me——'

At these words the ladies with one consent betrayed keener curiosity.

'But,' said the lawyer, 'I do not know whether I ought to go on; although I am inclined to think that it was but a dream, what remains to be told is serious.'

'Does it bear on religion?' asked Beaumarchais.

'Or is it in any way indecent?' asked Calonne. 'These ladies will forgive it.'

'It bears on government,' replied the lawyer.

'Go on,' said the Minister. 'Voltaire, Diderot, and their like have done much to educate our ears.'

The Controller-General was all attention, and his neighbour, Madame de Genlis, became absorbed. The stranger still hesitated. Then Beaumarchais exclaimed impetuously—

'Come, proceed, Maître! Do not you know that when the laws leave folks so little liberty, people revenge themselves by laxity of manners?'

So the lawyer went on—

'Whether it was that certain ideas were fermenting in my soul, or that I was prompted by some unknown power, I said to her—

'"Ah, Madam, you committed a very great crime."

'"Which?" she asked in a deep voice.

'"That for which the signal was given by the Palace clock on the 24th of August."

'She smiled scornfully, and some deep furrows showed on her pallid cheeks.

'"Do you call that a crime?" replied she; "it was only an accident. The undertaking was badly managed, and the good result we looked for failed—for France, for all Europe, and for the Catholic Church. How could we help it? Our orders were badly carried out. We could not find so many Montlucs as we needed. Posterity will not give us credit for the defective communications which hindered us from giving our work the unity of impulse which is necessary to any great *Coup d'État*; that was our misfortune. If by the 25th of August not the shadow of a Huguenot had been left in France, I should have been regarded to the remotest posterity as a noble incarnation of Providence. How often have the clear-seeing spirits of Sixtus v., of Richelieu, of Bossuet, secretly accused me of having failed in my undertaking, after daring to conceive of it! And how many regrets attended my death!

'"The disease was still rife thirty years after that Saint-Bartholomew's night; and it had caused the shedding of ten times more noble blood in France than

was left to be shed on August 26, 1572. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes, for which you had medals struck, cost more tears, more blood and money, and killed more prosperity in France than three Saint-Bartholomews. Letellier, with a dip of ink, carried into effect the decree which the Crown had secretly desired since my day; but though on August 25, 1572, this tremendous execution was necessary, on August 25, 1685, it was useless. Under Henri de Valois' second son heresy was scarcely pregnant; under Henri de Bourbon's second son the teeming mother had cast her spawn over the whole world.

'"You accuse me of crime, and you raise statues to the son of Anne of Austria! But he and I aimed at the same end. He succeeded; I failed; but Louis XIV. found the Protestants disarmed, while in my day they had powerful armies, statesmen, captains, and Germany to back them."

'On hearing these words slowly spoken, I felt within me a tremulous thrill. I seemed to scent the blood of I know not what victims. Catherine had grown before me. She stood there like an evil genius, and I felt as if she wanted to get into my conscience to find rest there——'

'He must have dreamed that,' said Beaumarchais, in a low voice. 'He certainly never invented it.'

'"My reason is confounded," said I to the Queen. "You pride yourself on an action which three generations have condemned and held accursed, and——"

'"Add," said she, "that writers have been more unjust to me than my contemporaries were. No one undertakes my defence. I am accused of ambition—I who was so rich and a Queen. I am taxed with cruelty—I who have but two decapitations on my conscience. And to the most impartial minds I am still, no doubt, a great riddle. Do you really believe that I was governed by feelings of hatred, that I breathed only vengeance

and fury?" She smiled scornfully. "I was as calm and cold as Reason itself. I condemned the Huguenots without pity, but without anger; they were the rotten orange in my basket. If I had been Queen of England, I should have judged the Catholics in the same way, if they had been seditious. To give our power any vitality at that period, only one God could be allowed in the State, only one faith and one master. Happily for me, I left my excuse recorded in one sentence. When Birague brought me a false report of the loss of the battle of Dreux—'Well and good,' said I, 'then we will go to Sermon.'—Hate the leaders of the New Religion? I esteemed them highly, and I did not know them. If I ever felt an aversion for any political personage, it was for that cowardly Cardinal de Lorraine, and for his brother, a wily and brutal soldier, who had me watched by their spies. They were my children's enemies; they wanted to snatch the crown from them; I saw them every day, and they were more than I could bear. If we had not carried out the plan for Saint-Bartholomew's Day, the Guises would have done it with the help of Rome and its monks. The Ligue, which had no power till I had grown old, would have begun in 1573."

'"But, Madam," said I, "instead of commanding that horrible butchery—excuse my frankness—why did you not employ the vast resources of your political genius in giving the Reformers the wise institutions which made Henri IV.'s reign so glorious and peaceful?"

'She smiled again, shrugging her shoulders, and her hollow wrinkles gave her pale features an ironical expression full of bitterness.

'"After a furious struggle a nation needs repose," said she. "That is the secret of that reign. But Henri IV. committed two irremediable blunders. He ought neither to have abjured Protestantism nor to have left France Catholic after his own conversion. He alone

has ever been in a position to change the face of France without a shock. Either not a single stole, or not a single conventicle! That is what he ought to have seen. To leave two hostile principles at work in a government with nothing to balance them is a crime in a King; it is sowing the seed of revolutions. It belongs to God alone to leave good and evil for ever at odds in the work of His hand. But this sentence was perhaps inscribed at the foundations of Henri IV.'s policy, and perhaps it was what led to his death. It is impossible that Sully should not have cast a covetous eye on the immense possessions of the clergy—though the clergy were not their sole masters, for the nobles dissipated at least two-thirds of the Church revenues. Sully the Reformer owned Abbeys nevertheless." She paused, to think, as it seemed.

'"But does it occur to you," said she, "that you are asking a Pope's niece her reason for remaining Catholic?" —Again she paused—"And, after all, I would just as soon have been a Calvinist," she went on, with a gesture of indifference. "Can the superior men of your age still think that religion had really anything to do with that great trial, the most tremendous of those that Europe has been required to decide—a vast revolution retarded by trivial causes, which will not hinder it from overflowing the whole world, since I failed to stop it.—A Revolution," said she, with a look of deep meaning, "which is still progressing, and which you may achieve. —Yes, *You*, who hear me!"

'I shuddered.'

'"What! Has no one yet understood that old interests on one hand, and on the other new interests, had taken Rome and Luther to be their standards of battle! What! When Louis IX., to avoid a somewhat kindred struggle, dragged after him a population a hundred times greater than that I condemned to death, and left them in the sands of Egypt, he

earned the title of Saint, while I!—But I," she added, "failed."'

'She looked down and stood silent for a minute. It was no longer a Queen that I beheld, but rather one of those Druidesses of old who sacrificed men, and could unroll the pages of the future while exhuming the lore of the past. But she presently raised her royal and majestic face.

'"By directing the attention of the middle classes to the abuses of the Roman Church," said she, "Luther and Calvin gave birth in Europe to a spirit of investigation which inevitably led the nations to examine everything. Examination leads to doubt. Instead of the faith indispensable to social existence, they brought in their train, and long after them, an inquisitive philosophy, armed with hammers, and greedy of destruction. Science, with its false lights, sprang glittering from the womb of heresy. Reform in the Church was not so much what was aimed at as the indefinite liberty of man, which is fatal to power. I have seen that. The result of the successes of the Reformers in their contest against the priesthood—even at that time better armed and more formidable than the Crown—was the destruction of the monarchical power raised with so much difficulty by Louis XI. on the ruins of feudality. Their aim was nothing less than the annihilation of Religion and Royalty, and over their wreck the middle classes of all lands were to join in a common compact. Thus this contest was war to the death between these new allies and ancient laws and beliefs. The Catholics were the representative expression of the material interests of the Crown, the Nobility, and the Priesthood.

'"It was a duel to the death between two giants; the night of Saint-Bartholomew was, unfortunately, only a wound. Remember that, to save a few drops of blood at the right moment, a torrent had to be shed at a later day. There is a misfortune which the Intelligence that

looks down on a kingdom cannot avert; that, namely, of having no peers by whom to be judged when he succumbs under the burden of events. My peers are few; fools are in the majority; these two propositions account for everything. If my name is held in execration in France, the inferior minds which constitute the mass of every generation are to blame.

"'In such great crises as I have been through, reigning does not mean holding audience, reviewing troops, and signing decrees. I may have made mistakes; I was but a woman. But why was there no man then living who was superior to the age? The Duke of Alva had a soul of iron, Philip II. was stultified by Catholic dogmas, Henri IV. was a gambler and a libertine, the Admiral was systematically pig-headed. Louis XI. had lived too soon; Richelieu came too late. Whether it were virtuous or criminal, whether the Massacre of Saint-Bartholomew is attributed to me or no, I accept the burden. I shall always stand between those two great men as a visible link in an unrecognised chain. Some day paradoxical writers will wonder whether nations have not sometimes given the name of executioner to those who, in fact, were victims. Not once only will mankind be ready to immolate a God rather than accuse itself! You are all ready to shed tears for two hundred louts, when you refuse them for the woes of a generation, of a century, of the whole world! And you also forget that political liberty, the peace of a nation, and science itself are gifts for which Fate demands a heavy tax in blood!"

"'May the nations never be happy at less cost?" cried I, with tears in my eyes.

"'Great Truths leave their wells only to find fresh vigour in baths of blood. Christianity itself, the essence of all truth, since it proceeds from God, was not established without martyrs. Has not blood flowed in torrents? Must it not for ever flow?—You will know

—you who are to be one of the builders of the social edifice founded by the apostles. As long as you use your instruments to level heads, you will be applauded; then, when you want to take up the trowel, you will be killed."

'"Blood! blood!"—the words rang in my brain like the echo of a bell.

'"According to you," said I, "Protestantism has the same right as you have to argue thus?"

'But Catherine had vanished as though some draught of air had extinguished the supernatural light which enabled my mind to see the figure which had grown to gigantic proportions. I had suddenly discerned in myself an element which assimilated the horrible doctrines set forth by the Italian Queen.

'I woke in a sweat, and in tears; and at the moment when reason, triumphing within me, assured me in her mild tones that it was not the function of a King, nor even of a nation, to practise these principles, worthy only of a people of atheists——'

'And how are perishing monarchies to be saved?' asked Beaumarchais.

'God is above all, Monsieur,' replied my neighbour.

'Well, then,' said Monsieur de Calonne, with the flippancy which characterised him, 'we have always the resource of believing ourselves to be instruments in the hand of God, as the gospel according to Bossuet has it.'

As soon as the ladies understood that the whole scene was a conversation between the Queen and the lawyer, they had begun whispering. Indeed, I have spared the reader the exclamations and interruptions with which they broke into the lawyer's narrative. However, such phrases as, 'What a deadly bore!' and 'My dear, when will he have done?' reached my ear.

When the stranger ceased speaking, the ladies were silent. Monsieur Bodard was asleep. The surgeon being half drunk, Lavoisier, Beaumarchais, and I alone

had been listening; Monsieur de Calonne was playing with the lady at his side.

At this moment the silence was almost solemn. The light of the tapers seemed to me to have a magical hue. A common sentiment linked us by mysterious bonds to this man who, to me, suggested the inexplicable effects of fanaticism. It needed nothing less than the deep hollow voice of Beaumarchais' neighbour to rouse us.

'I too dreamed!' he exclaimed.

I then looked more particularly at the surgeon, and felt an indescribable sentiment of horror. His earthy complexion, his features, large but vulgar, were the exact expression of what I must be allowed to call *la canaille*, the rough mob. A few specks of dull blue and black dotted his skin like spots of mud, and his eyes flashed with sinister fires. The face looked more ominous perhaps than it really was, because a powdered wig *à la frimas* crowned his head with snow.

'That man must have buried more than one patient,' said I to my neighbour.

'I would not trust my dog to his care,' he replied.

'I hate him involuntarily,' said I.

'I despise him,' replied he.

'And yet how unjust!' cried I.

'Oh! bless me, by the day after to-morrow he may be as famous as Volange the actor,' replied the stranger.

Monsieur de Calonne pointed to the surgeon with a gesture that seemed to convey, 'This fellow might amuse us.'

'And did you too dream of a queen?' asked Beaumarchais.

'No, I dreamed of a people,' said he with emphasis, making us laugh. 'I was attending a patient whose leg I was to amputate the next day——'

'And you found a people in your patient's thigh?' asked Monsieur de Calonne.

'Exactly so!' replied the surgeon.

'Is not he amusing?' cried Madame de Genlis.

'I was greatly surprised,' the speaker went on, never heeding these interruptions, and stuffing his hands into his breeches pockets, 'to find some one to talk to in that leg. I had the strange power of entering into my patient. When I first found myself in his skin, I discerned there an amazing number of tiny beings, moving, thinking, and arguing. Some lived in the man's body, and some in his mind. His ideas were creatures that were born, grew, and died; they were sick, gay, healthy, sad—and all had personal individuality. They fought or fondled. A few ideas flew forth and went to dwell in the world of intellect. Suddenly I understood that there are two worlds—the visible and the invisible universe; that the earth, like man, has a body and a soul. A new light was cast on nature, and I perceived its immensity when I saw the ocean of beings everywhere distributed in masses and in species, all of one and the same living matter, from marble rocks up to God. A magnificent sight! In short, there was a universe in my patient. When I inserted my lancet in his gangrened leg, I destroyed a thousand such beings.—You laugh, ladies, at the idea that you are a prey to a thousand creatures——'

'No personalities,' said Monsieur de Calonne,' speak for yourself and your patient.'

'My man, horrified at the outcry of his animalcules, wanted to stop the operation; but I persisted, telling him that maligant creatures were already gnawing at his bones. He made a motion to resist me, not understanding that what I was doing was for his good, and my lancet pierced me in the side——'

'He is too stupid,' said Lavoisier.

'No, he is drunk,' replied Beaumarchais.

'But, gentlemen, my dream has a meaning,' cried the surgeon.

'Oh, oh!' cried Bodard, waking, 'my leg is asleep!'

'Your animalcules are dead,' said his wife.

'That man has a vocation,' said my neighbour, who had imperturbably stared at the surgeon all the time he was talking.

'It is to Monsieur's vocation what action is to speech, or the body to the soul,' said the ugly guest.

But his tongue was heavy, and he got confused; he could only utter unintelligible words. Happily, the conversation took another turn. By the end of half an hour we had forgotten the surgeon to the Court pages, and he was asleep.

When we rose from table, the rain was pouring in torrents.

'The lawyer is no fool,' said I to Beaumarchais.

'Oh! he is dull and cold. But you see the provinces can still produce good folks who take political theories and the history of France quite seriously. It is a leaven that will spread.'

'Have you a carriage?' Madame de Saint-James asked me.

'No,' said I shortly. 'I did not know that I should want it this evening. You thought, perhaps, that I should take home the Controller-General? Did he come to your house *en polisson*?' (the fashionable name at the time for a person who drove his own carriage at Marly dressed as a coachman.) Madame de Saint-James left me hastily, rang the bell, ordered her husband's carriage, and took the lawyer aside.

'Monsieur de Robespierre, will you do me the favour of seeing Monsieur Marat home, for he is incapable of standing upright?' said she.

'With pleasure, Madame,' replied Monsieur de Robespierre with an air of gallantry; 'I wish you had ordered me to do something more difficult.'

PARIS, *January* 1828.

NOTE

This is the song published by the Abbé de la Place in his collection of interesting fragments, in which may be found the dissertation alluded to. [It will be seen that it goes to the old tune of *Malbrouk s'en va-t-en guerre.*]

THE DUC DE GUISE'S BURIAL

Qui veut ouïr chanson? (*Bis.*)
C'est du Grand Duc de Guise;
Et bon bon bon bon,
Di dan di dan don,
C'est du Grand Duc de Guise!
(This last line was spoken, no doubt, in a comic tone.)
Qui est mort et enterré.

Qui est mort et enterré. (*Bis.*)
Aux quatre coins du poêle,
Et bon bon bon bon,
Di dan di dan don,
Quatre gentilshomm's y avoit.

Quatre gentilshomm's y avoit. (*Bis.*)
L'un portoit son grand casque,
Et bon, etc.
Et l'autre ses pistolets.

Et l'autre ses pistolets, (*Bis.*)
Et l'autre son épée,
Et bon, etc.
Qui tant d'Hugu'nots a tués.

Qui tant d'Hugu'nots a tués. (*Bis.*)
Venoit le quatrième,
Et bon, etc.
Qui étoit le plus dolent.

Qui étoit le plus dolent ; (*Bis.*)
Après venoient les pages,
Et bon, etc.
Et les valets de pied.

Et les valets de pied, (*Bis.*)
Avecque de grands crêpes,
Et bon, etc.
Et des souliers cirés.

Et des souliers cirés, (*Bis.*)
Et des beaux bas d'estame,
Et bon, etc.
Et des culottes de piau.

Et des culottes de piau. (*Bis.*)
La cérémonie faite,
Et bon, etc.,
Chacun s'alla coucher.

Chacun s'alla coucher : (*Bis.*)
Les uns avec leurs femmes,
Et bon, etc.
Et les autres tout seuls.

The discovery of these curious verses seems to prove, to a certain extent, the guilt of Théodore de Bèze, who tried to mitigate the horror caused by this murder by turning it to ridicule. The principal merit of this song lay, it would appear, in the tune

THE END.

PART II

PIERRETTE

AND

THE ABBÉ BIROTTEAU

PREFACE

Les Célibataires, the longest number of the original *Comédie* under a single title, next to *Illusions perdues*, is not, like that book, connected by any unity of story. Indeed, the general bond of union is pretty weak; and though it is quite true that bachelors and old maids are the heroes and heroines of all three, it would be rather hard to establish any other bond of connection, and it is rather unlikely that any one unprompted would fix on this as a sufficient ground of partnership.

Two at least of the component parts, however, are of very high excellence. I do not myself think that *Pierrette*, which opens the series, is quite the equal of its companions. Written, as it was, for Countess Anna de Hanska, Balzac's step-daughter of the future, while she was still very young, it partakes necessarily of the rather elaborate artificiality of all attempts to suit the young person, of French attempts in particular, and it may perhaps be said of Balzac's attempts most of all. It belongs, in a way, to the Arcis series—the series which also includes the fine *Ténébreuse Affaire* and the unfinished *Député d'Arcis*—but is not very closely connected therewith. The picture of the actual *Célibataires*, the brother and sister Rogron, with which it opens, is in one of Balzac's

best-known styles, and is executed with all his usual mastery both of the minute and of the at least partially repulsive, showing also that strange knowledge of the *bourgeois de Paris* which, somehow or other, he seems to have attained by dint of unknown forgatherings in his ten years of apprenticeship. But when we come to *Pierrette* herself, the story is, I think, rather less satisfying. Her persecutions and her end, and the devotion of the faithful Brigaut and the rest, are pathetic no doubt, but tend (I hope it is not heartless to say it) just a very little towards *sensiblerie*. The fact is that the thing is not quite in Balzac's line.

The other and shorter constituent of the book, *The Abbé Birotteau*, is certainly on a higher level, and has attracted the most magnificent eulogies from some of the novelist's admirers. I think both Mr. Henry James and Mr. Wedmore have singled out this little piece for detailed and elaborate praise, and there is no doubt that it is a happy example of a kind in which the author excelled. The opening, with its evident but not obtruded remembrance of the old and well-founded superstition—derived from the universal belief in some form of Nemesis—that an extraordinary sense of happiness, good luck, or anything of the kind, is a precursor of misfortune, and calls for some instant act of sacrifice or humiliation, is very striking; and the working out of the vengeance of the goddess by the very ungoddess-like though feminine hand of Mademoiselle Gamard has much that is commendable. Nothing in its well exampled kind is better touched off than the Listomère coterie, from the shrewdness of Monsieur de Bourbonne to the selfishness of Madame de Listomère. I do not know that

the old maid herself—cat, and far worse than cat as she is—is at all exaggerated, and the sketch of the coveted *appartement* and its ill-fated *mobilier* is about as good as it can be. And the battle between Madame de Listomère and the Abbé Troubert, which has served as a model for many similar things, has, if it has often been equalled, not often been surpassed.

I cannot, however, help thinking that there is more than a little exaggeration in more than one point of the story. The Abbé Birotteau is surely a little too much of a fool; the Abbé Troubert an Iago a little too much wanting in verisimilitude; and the central incident of the clause about the furniture too manifestly improbable. Taking the first and the last points together, is it likely that any one not quite an idiot should, in the first place, remain so entirely ignorant of the value of his property; should, in the second, though, ignorant or not, he attached the greatest possible *pretium affectionis* to it, contract to resign it for such a ridiculous consideration; and should, in the third, take the fatal step without so much as remembering the condition attached thereto? If it be answered that Birotteau *was* idiot enough to do such a thing, then it must be observed further that one's sympathy is frozen by the fact. Such a man deserved such treatment. And, again, even if French justice was, and perhaps is, as much influenced by secret considerations as Balzac loves to represent it, we must agree with that member of the Listomère society who pointed out that no tribunal could possibly uphold such an obviously iniquitous bargain. As for Troubert, the idea of the Jesuitical ecclesiastic (though Balzac was not personally hostile to

the Jesuits) was a common one at the time, and no doubt popular, but the actual personage seems to me nearer to Eugène Sue's Rodin in some ways than I could have desired.

These things, however, are very much a case of 'As You Like It' or 'As It Strikes You,' and I have said that *The Abbé Birotteau* strikes some good judges as of exceptional merit, while no one can refuse it merit in a high degree. I should not, except for the opening, place it in the very highest class of the *Comédie*, but it is high beyond all doubt in the second.

Pierrette, which was earlier called *Pierrette Lorrain*, was issued in 1840, first in the *Siècle*, and then in volume form, published by Souverain. In both issues it had nine chapter or book divisions with headings. With the other *Célibataires* it entered the *Comédie* as a *Scène de la Vie de Province* in 1843.

The *Abbé Birotteau* (which Balzac had at one time intended to call by the name of the Curé's enemy, and which at first was simply called by the general title *Les Célibataires*) is much older than its companions, and appeared in 1832 in the *Scènes de la Vie Privée*. It was soon properly shifted to the *Vie de Province*, and as such in due time joined the *Comédie* bearing the title of *Le Curé de Tours*.

G. S.

PIERRETTE

To Mademoiselle Anna de Hanska.

Dear child,—You, the joy of a whole house, you, whose white or rose-coloured cape flutters in the summer like a will-o'-the-wisp through the arbours of Wierzchownia, followed by the wistful eyes of your father and mother—how can I dedicate to you a tale full of sadness? But is it not well to tell you of sorrows such as a girl so fondly loved as you are will never know? For some day your fair hands may take them comfort. It is so difficult, Anna, to find in the picture of our manners any incident worthy to meet your eye, that an author has no choice; but perhaps you may discern how happy you are from reading this tale, sent by

Your old friend,

De Balzac.

In October 1827, at break of day, a youth of about sixteen, whose dress proclaimed him to be what modern phraseology insolently calls a proletarian, was standing on a little square in the lower part of the town of Provins. At this early hour he could, without being observed, study the various houses set round the Place in an oblong square. The mills on the streams of Provins were already at work. Their noise, repeated by the echoes from the upper town, and harmonising with the sharp air and the clear freshness of the morning,

bewrayed the perfect silence—so complete that the clatter of a diligence was audible, still a league away on the high road.

The two longer rows of houses, divided by an arched avenue of lime-trees, are artless in style, confessing the peaceful and circumscribed life of the townsfolk. In this part of the town there are no signs of trade. At that time there was hardly a carriage-gate suggesting the luxury of the rich—or if there were, it rarely turned on its hinges—excepting that of Monsieur Martener, a doctor who was obliged to keep and use a cab. Some of the fronts were graced by a long vine stem, others with climbing roses growing up to the first floor, and scenting the windows with their large scattered bunches of flowers. One end of this Square almost joins the High Street of the lower town ; the other end is shut in by a street parallel with the High Street, and the gardens beyond run down to one of the two rivers that water the valley of Provins.

At this end, the quietest part of the Place, the young workman recognised the house that had been described to him—a front of white stone, scored with seams to represent joins in the masonry, and windows with light iron balconies, decorated with rosettes painted yellow, and closed with grey Venetian shutters. Above this front—a ground floor and a first floor only—three attic windows pierce a slate-roof, and on one of the gables twirls a brand-new weather-cock. This modern weather-cock represents a sportsman aiming at a hare. The front door is reached up three stone steps. On one side of the door an end of leaden pipe spouts dirty water into a little gutter, revealing the kitchen ; on the other, two windows, carefully guarded by grey wooden shutters in which heart-shaped holes are cut to admit a little light, seemed to our youth to be those of the dining-room. In the basement secured by the three steps, under each window is an air-opening into the cellars, closed by painted iron

shutters pierced with holes in a pattern. Everything was then quite new. An observer, looking at this house freshly repaired, its still raw splendour contrasting with the antique aspect of all the rest, would at once have seen in it the mean ideas and perfect contentment of a retired tradesman.

The young fellow gazed at every detail with an expression of pleasure mingled with sadness; his eyes wandered from the kitchen to the garret with a look that denoted meditation. The pink gleams of sunshine showed in one of the attic windows a cotton curtain which was wanting to the others. Then the lad's face brightened completely; he withdrew a few steps, leaned his back against a lime-tree, and sang, in the drawling tones peculiar to the natives of the West, this ballad of Brittany, published by Bruguière, a composer to whom we owe some charming airs. In Brittany the young swains of the villages sing this song to newly-married couples on their wedding day—

'We come to wish you every happiness,
To th' maister at your side,
As well as to the bride.

'You, mistress bride, are bound for life and death,
With a bright golden chain,
That none may break in twain.

'Now you to fairs and junkets go no more;
Nay, you must stay at home,
While we may dance and roam.

'And do you know how trusty you must be,
And faithful to your mate,
To love him rathe and late?

'Then take this posy I have made for you.
Alack! for happy hours
Must perish like these flowers.'

This national air, as sweet as that arranged by Chateaubriand to the words *Ma sœur, te souvient-il encore?* sung

in a little town of la Brie in Champagne, could not fail to arouse irresistible memories in a native of Brittany, so faithfully does it paint the manners, the simplicity, the scenery of that noble old province. There is in it an intangible melancholy, caused by the realities of life, which is deeply touching. And is not this power to awaken a whole world of grave, sweet, sad things by a familiar and often cheerful strain, characteristic of those popular airs which are the superstitions of music, if we accept the word superstition as meaning what remains from the ruin of nations, the flotsam left by revolutions?

As he ended the first verse, the workman, who never took his eyes off the curtain in the attic, saw no one astir. While he was singing the second, it moved a little. As he sang the words, 'Take this posy,' a young girl's face was seen. A fair hand cautiously opened the window, and the girl nodded to the wanderer as he ended with the melancholy reflection contained in the two last lines—

'Alack! for happy hours
Must perish like these flowers.'

The lad suddenly took from under his jacket, and held up to her, a golden-yellow spray of a flower very common in Brittany, which he had picked no doubt in a field in la Brie, where it is somewhat rare—the flower of the furze.

'Why, is it you, Brigaut?' said the girl in a low voice.

'Yes, Pierrette, yes. I am living in Paris; I am walking about France; but I might settle down here, since you are here.'

At this moment the window-fastening of the room on the first floor, below Pierrette's, was heard to creak. The girl showed the greatest alarm, and said to Brigaut, 'Fly!'

The young fellow jumped like a frog to a bend in the

street, round a mill, before entering the wider street that is the artery of the lower town; but in spite of his agility, his hobnailed shoes, ringing on the paving-cobbles of Provins, made a noise easily distinguished from the music of the mill, and heard by the individual who opened the window.

This person was a woman. No man ever tears himself from the delights of his morning slumbers to listen to a minstrel in a round jacket. None but a maid is roused by a love song. And this was a maid—and an old maid. When she had thrown open her shutters with the action of a bat, she looked about her on all sides, and faintly heard Brigaut's steps as he made his escape. Is there on earth anything more hideous than the matutinal apparition of an ugly old maid at her window? Of all the grotesque spectacles that are the amusement of travellers as they go through little towns, is it not the most unpleasing? It is too depressing, too repulsive to be laughed at.

This particular old maid, whose ear was so keen, appeared bereft of the artifices of all kinds that she used to improve herself; she had no front of false hair, and no collar. Her headgear was the frightful little caul of black sarsnet which old women draw over their skull, showing beyond her night-cap, which had been pushed aside in her sleep. This untidiness gave her head the sinister appearance ascribed by painters to witches. The temples, ears, and nape, scarcely concealed, betrayed their withered leanness, the coarse wrinkles were conspicuous for a redness that did not charm the eye, and that was thrown into relief by the comparative whiteness of a bedgown tied at the throat with twisted tapes. The gaps where this bedgown fell open revealed a chest like that of some old peasant woman careless of her ugliness. The fleshless arm might have been a stick covered with stuff. Seen at the window, the lady appeared tall by reason of the strength and breadth of her face, which

reminded the spectator of the extravagant size of some Swiss countenances. The chief characteristic of the features, which presented a singular lack of harmony, was a hardness of line, a harshness of colouring, and a lack of feeling in the expression which would have filled a physiognomist with disgust. These peculiarities, visible now, were habitually modified by a sort of business smile, and a vulgar stupidity which aped goodnature so successfully that the people among whom she lived might easily have supposed her to be a kind woman.

She and her brother shared the ownership of this house. The brother was sleeping so soundly in his room that the Opera-house orchestra would not have roused him ; and the power of that orchestra is famous ! The old maid put her head out of the window, and raised her eyes to that of the attic—eyes of a cold pale blue, with short lashes set in lids that were almost always swollen. She tried to see Pierrette ; but recognising the futility of the attempt, she withdrew into her room with a movement not unlike that of a tortoise hiding its head after putting it out of its shell. The shutters were closed again, and the silence of the Square was no more disturbed but by peasants coming into the town, or early risers. When there is an old maid in the house a watch-dog is not needed ; not the smallest event occurs without her seeing it, commenting on it, and deducing every possible consequence. Thus this incident was destined to give rise to serious inferences, and to be the opening of one of those obscure dramas which are played out in the family, but which are none the less terrible for being unseen—if indeed the name of drama may be applied to this tragedy of home-life.

Pierrette did not get into bed again. To her Brigaut's arrival was an event of immense importance. During the night—the Eden of the wretched—she escaped from the annoyances and fault-finding she had to endure all day. Like the hero of some German or Russian ballad,

to her sleep seemed a happy life, and the day a bad dream. This morning, for the first time in three years, she had had a happy waking. The memories of infancy had sweetly sung their poetry to her soul. She had heard the first verse in her dreams; the second had roused her with a start; at the third she had doubted—the unfortunate are of the school of Saint Thomas; at the fourth verse, standing at her window, barefoot, and in her shift, she had recognised Brigaut, the friend of her childhood.

Yes, that was indeed the short square jacket with quaint little tails and pockets swinging just over the hips, the classical blue-cloth jacket of the Breton; the waistcoat of coarse knit, the linen shirt buttoned with a golden heart, the wide-rolled collar, the earrings, heavy shoes, trousers of blue drill, mottled in streaks of lighter shades; in short, all the humble and durable items of a poor Breton's costume. The large white horn buttons of the jacket and waistcoat had set Pierrette's heart beating. At the sight of the branch of furze the tears had started to her eyes; then a spasm of terror clutched her heart, crushing the flowers of remembrance that had blossomed for a moment. It struck her that her cousin might have heard her rise and go to the window. She knew the old woman, and made the signal of alarm to Brigaut, which the poor boy had hastened to obey without understanding it. Does not this instinctive obedience betray one of those innocent and mastering affections such as are to be seen once in an age, on this earth where they bloom, like the aloe-trees on Isola Bella, but two or three times in a century. Any one seeing Brigaut fly would have admired the artless heroism of a most artless love.

Jacques Brigaut was worthy of Pierrette Lorrain, who was now nearly fourteen—two children! Pierrette could not help weeping as she saw him take to his heels with the terror inspired by her warning gesture.

She then sat down in a rickety armchair, in front of

a looking-glass above a little table. On this she set her elbows, and remained pensive for an hour, trying to recall the Marais, the hamlet of Pen-Hoël, the adventurous voyages on a pond in a boat untied from an old willow-tree by little Jacques; then the old faces—her grandmother and grandfather, her mother's look of suffering, and General Brigaut's handsome head; a whole childhood of careless joy! And this again was a dream—the lights of happiness against a grey background.

She had fine light-brown hair, all in disorder, under a little nightcap tumbled in her sleep, a little cambric cap with frills that she herself had made. On each side curls fell over her temples, escaping from their grey papers. At the back of her head a thick plait hung down to her shoulders. The excessive pallor of her face showed that she was a victim to a girlish ailment to which medical science gives the pretty name of chlorosis, which robs the blood of its natural hue, disturbing the appetite, and betraying much disorderment of the whole system. This waxen hue was apparent in all the flesh-tints. The whiteness of her neck and shoulders, the colourlessness of an etiolated plant, accounted for the thinness of her arms crossed in front of her. Pierrette's feet even looked weak and shrunken by disease; her shift, falling only to her calf, showed the relaxed sinews, blue veins, and bloodless muscles. As the cold air chilled her, her lips turned purple. The mournful smile that parted her fairly delicate mouth showed teeth of ivory whiteness, even and small, pretty transparent teeth, in harmony with well-shaped ears and a nose that was elegant, if a little sharp; her face, though perfectly round, was very sweet. All the life of this charming countenance lay in the eyes; the iris, of a bright snuff-brown mottled with black, shone with golden lights round a deep bright retina. Pierrette ought to have been gay; she was sad. Her vanished gaiety lingered

in the vivid modelling of her eyes, in the ingenuous form of her brow, and the moulding of her short chin. The long eyelashes lay like brushes on the cheeks worn by debility; the whiteness, too lavishly diffused, gave great purity to the lines and features of her countenance. The ear was a little masterpiece of modelling; it might have been of marble.

Pierrette suffered in many ways. Perhaps you would like to have her story? Here it is.

Pierrette's mother was a Demoiselle Auffray of Provins, half-sister to Madame Rogron, the mother of the present owners of this house. Monsieur Auffray, after marrying for the first time at the age of eighteen, took a second wife at the age of sixty-nine. The child of his first marriage was an only daughter, ugly enough, who, when she was sixteen, married an innkeeper of Provins named Rogron. By his second marriage old Auffray had another daughter, but she was very pretty. Thus the quaint result was an enormous difference in age between Monsieur Auffray's two daughters. The child of his first wife was fifty when the second was born. By the time her father gave her a sister Madame Rogron had two children of her own, both of full age.

The uxorious old man's younger child was married for love, at eighteen, to a Breton officer named Lorrain, a captain in the Imperial Guard. Love often begets ambition. The captain, eager to get his colonelcy, exchanged into the line. While the Major and his wife, comfortable enough with the allowance given them by Monsieur and Madame Auffray, were living handsomely in Paris, or running about Germany as the Emperor's wars or truces might guide them, old Auffray, a retired grocer at Provins, died suddenly, before he had time to make his will. The good man's estate was so cleverly manipulated by the innkeeper and his wife that they absorbed the larger part of it, leaving to old Auffray's

widow no more than the house in the little Square and a few acres of land. This widow, little Madame Lorrain's mother, was but eight-and-thirty when her husband died. Like many other widows, she had an unwholesome wish to marry again. She sold to her stepdaughter, old Madame Rogron, the land and house she had inherited under her marriage settlement, to marry a young doctor named Néraud, who ran through her fortune, and she died of grief in great poverty two years afterwards.

Thus Madame Lorrain's share of the Auffray property had in great part disappeared, being reduced to about eight thousand francs.

Major Lorrain died on the field of honour at Montereau, leaving his widow, then one-and-twenty, burthened with a little girl fourteen months old, and with no fortune but the pension she could claim from Government, and whatever money might come to her from Monsieur and Madame Lorrain, tradespeople at Pen-Hoël, a town of la Vendée, in the district known as le Marais. These Lorrains, the parents of the deceased officer, and Pierrette's paternal grandfather and grandmother, sold building-timber, slates, tiles, cornices, pipes, and the like. Their business was a poor one, either from their incapacity or from ill luck, and brought them in a bare living. The failure of the great house of Colinet at Nantes, brought about by the events of 1814, which caused a sudden fall in the price of colonial produce, resulted in a loss to them of eighty thousand francs they had placed on deposit. Their daughter-in-law was therefore warmly received; the Major's widow brought with her a pension of eight hundred francs, an enormous sum at Pen-Hoël. When her half-sister and brother-in-law Rogron sent her the eight thousand francs due to her, after endless formalities, prolonged by distance, she placed the money in the Lorrains' hands, taking a mortgage, however, on a little house they

owned at Nantes, let for a hundred crowns a year, and worth, perhaps, ten thousand francs.

Young Madame Lorrain died there after her mother's second and luckless marriage, in 1819, and almost at the same time as her mother. This daughter of the old man and his young wife was small, fragile, and delicate; the damp air of the Marais did not agree with her. Her husband's family, eager to keep her there, persuaded her that nowhere else in the world would she find a place healthier or pleasanter than the Marais, the scene of Charette's exploits. She was so well taken care of, nursed, and coaxed, that her death brought honour to the Lorrains.

Some persons asserted that Brigaut, an old Vendéen, one of those men of iron who served under Charette, Mercier, the Marquis de Montauran, and the Baron du Guénic in the wars against the Republic, counted for much in young Madame Lorrain's submission. If this were so, it was certainly for the sake of a most loving and devoted soul. And, indeed, all Pen-Hoël could see that Brigaut, respectfully designated as the Major—having held that rank in the Royalist army—spent his days and his evenings in the Lorrains' sitting-room by the side of the Emperor's Major's widow. Towards the end the curé of Pen-Hoël allowed himself to speak of this matter to old Madame Lorrain; he begged her to persuade her daughter-in-law to marry Brigaut, promising to get him an appointment as justice of the peace to the district of Pen-Hoël, by the intervention of the Vicomte de Kergarouët. But the poor woman's death made the scheme useless.

Pierrette remained with her grandparents, who owed her four hundred francs a year, naturally spent on her maintenance. The old people, now less and less fit for business, had an active and pushing rival in trade, whom they could only abuse, without doing anything to protect themselves. The Major, their friend and adviser,

died six months after young Madame Lorrain, perhaps of grief, or perhaps of his wounds; he had had seven-and-twenty. Their bad neighbour, as a good man of business, now aimed at ruining his rivals, so as to extinguish all competition. He got the Lorrains to borrow on their note of hand, foreseeing that they could never pay, and so forced them, in their old age, to become bankrupt. Pierrette's mortgage was second to a mortgage held by her grandmother, who clung to her rights to secure a morsel of bread for her husband. The house at Nantes was sold for nine thousand five hundred francs, and the costs came to fifteen hundred francs. The remaining eight thousand francs came to Madame Lorrain, who invested them in a mortgage in order to live at Nantes in a sort of almshouse, like that of Sainte-Périne in Paris, called Saint-Jacques, where the two old people found food and lodging at a very moderate rate.

As it was impossible that they should take with them their little destitute grandchild, the old Lorrains bethought them of her uncle and aunt Rogron, to whom they wrote. The Rogrons of Provins were dead. Thus the letter from the Lorrains to the Rogrons would seem to be lost. But if there is anything here below which can take the place of Providence, is it not the General Post Office? The genius of the Post, immeasurably superior to that of the Public, outdoes in inventiveness the imagination of the most brilliant novelist. As soon as the Post has charge of a letter, worth, on delivery, from three to ten sous, if it fails at once to find him or her to whom it should be delivered, it displays a mercenary solicitude which has no parallel but in the boldest duns. The Post comes, goes, hunts through the eighty-six departments. Difficulties incite the genius of its officials, who, not unfrequently, are men of letters, and who then throw themselves into the pursuit with the ardour of the mathematicians at the National Observatory; they rummage the kingdom. At the faintest gleam of hope

the Paris offices are on the alert again. You often sit amazed as you inspect the scrawls that meander over the letter, back and front—the glorious evidence of the administrative perseverance that animates the Post Office. If a man were to undertake what the Post has accomplished, he would have spent ten thousand francs in travelling, in time and in money, to recover twelve sous. The Post certainly has more intelligence than it conveys.

The letter written by the Lorrains to Monsieur Rogron, who had been dead a year, was transmitted by the Post to Monsieur Rogron, his son, a haberdasher in the Rue Saint-Denis, Paris. This is where the genius of the Post Office shines. An heir is always more or less puzzled to know whether he has really scraped up the whole of his inheritance, whether he has not forgotten some debt or some fragments. The Revenue guesses everything; it even reads character. A letter addressed to old Rogron of Provins was bound to pique the curiosity of Rogron *junior* of Paris, or of Mademoiselle Rogron, his heirs. So the Revenue earned its sixty centimes.

The Rogrons, towards whom the Lorrains held out beseeching hands though they were in despair at having to part from their granddaughter, thus became the arbiters of Pierrette Lorrain's fate. It is indispensable, therefore, to give some account of their antecedents and their character.

Old Rogron, the innkeeper at Provins, on whom old Auffray had bestowed the child of his first marriage, was hot-faced, with a purple-veined nose, and cheeks which Bacchus had overlaid with his crimson and bulbous blossoms. Though stout, short, and pot-bellied, with stumpy legs and heavy hands, he had all the shrewdness of the Swiss innkeeper, resembling that race. His face remotely suggested a vast hail-stricken vineyard. Certainly he was not handsome; but his wife was like him. Never were a better matched couple. Rogron liked

good living and to have pretty girls to wait on him. He was one of the sect of Egoists whose ways are brutal, and who give themselves up to their vices and do their will in the face of Israel. Greedy, mercenary, and by no means refined, obliged to be the purveyor to his own fancies, he ate up all he earned till his teeth failed him. Then avarice remained. In his old age he sold his inn, collected, as we have seen, all his father-in-law's leavings, and retired to the little house in the Square, which he bought for a piece of bread of old Auffray's widow, Pierrette's grandmother.

Rogron and his wife owned about two thousand francs a year, derived from the letting of twenty-seven plots of land in the neighbourhood of Provins, and the interest on the price of their inn, which they had sold for twenty thousand francs. Old Auffray's house, though in a very bad state, was used as it was for a dwelling by the inn-keepers, who avoided repairing it as they would have shunned the plague; old rats love cracks and ruins. The retired publican, taking a fancy for gardening, spent his savings in adding to his garden; he extended it to the bank of the river, making a long square shut in by two walls, and ending with a stone embankment, below which the water-plants, left to run wild, displayed their abundant flowers.

Early in their married life the Rogron couple had a son and a daughter, with two years between them; everything degenerates; their children were hideous. Put out to nurse in the country as cheaply as possible, these unhappy little ones came home with the wretched training of village life, having cried long and often for their foster-mother, who went to work in the fields, and who left them meanwhile shut up in one of the dark, damp, low rooms which form the dwelling of the French peasant. By this process the children's features grew thick, and their voices harsh; they were far from flattering their mother's vanity, and she tried to correct them

of their bad habits by a severity which, by comparison with their father's, seemed tenderness itself. They were left to play in the yards, stables, and outhouses of the inn, or to run about the town; they were sometimes whipped; sometimes they were sent to their grandfather Auffray, who loved them little. This injustice was one of the reasons that encouraged the Rogrons to secure a large share of the 'old rascal's' leavings. Meanwhile, however, Rogron sent his boy to school; and he paid a man, one of his carters, to save the lad from the conscription. As soon as his daughter Sylvie was twelve years old, he sent her to Paris as an apprentice in a house of business. Two years later, his son Jérôme-Denis was packed off by the same road. When his friends the carriers, who were his allies, or the inn customers asked him what he meant to do with his children, old Rogron explained his plans with a brevity which had this advantage over the statements of most fathers, that it was frank—

'When they are of an age to understand me, I shall just give them a kick you know where, saying, "Be off and make your fortune,"' he would reply, as he drank, or wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. Then looking at the inquirer with a knowing wink, 'Ha, ha!' he would add, 'they are not greater fools than I am. My father gave me three kicks, I shall give them but one. He put a louis into my hand, I will give them ten; so they will be better off than I was.—That's the right way. And after I am gone, what is left will be left; the notaries will find them fast enough. A pretty joke, indeed, if I am to keep myself short for the children's sake! They owe their being to me; I have brought them up; I ask nothing of them; they have not paid me back, heh, neighbour? I began life as a carter, and that did not hinder me from marrying that old rascal Auffray's daughter.'

Sylvie was placed as an apprentice, with a premium of

a hundred crowns for her board, with some tradespeople in the Rue Saint-Denis, natives of Provins. Two years later she was paying her way; though she earned no money, her parents had nothing to pay for her food and lodging. This, in the Rue Saint-Denis, is called being 'at par.' Two years later Sylvie was earning a hundred crowns a year. In the course of that time her mother had sent her a hundred francs for pocket-money. Thus, at the age of nineteen, Mademoiselle Sylvie Rogron was independent. When she was twenty, she was second 'young lady' in the house of Julliard, raw-silk merchants, at the sign of the *Ver chinois* (or Silkworm), in the Rue Saint-Denis.

The history of the brother was like the sister's. Little Jérôme-Denis Rogron was placed with one of the largest wholesale mercers in the Rue Saint-Denis, the *maison Guépin* at the *Trois Quenouilles*. While Sylvie, at twenty-one, was forewoman with a thousand francs a year, Jérôme-Denis, better served by luck, was, at eighteen, head shop-clerk, earning twelve hundred, with the Guépins, also natives of Provins. The brother and sister met every Sunday and holiday, and spent the day in cheap amusements. They dined outside Paris; they went to Saint-Cloud, Meudon, Belleville, or Vincennes.

At the end of 1815 they united the money they had earned by the sweat of their brow, and bought of Madame Guenée the business and goodwill of a famous house, the *Sœur de famille*, one of the best known retail haberdashers. The sister kept the cash, the shop, and the accounts; the brother was both buyer and head-clerk, as Sylvie was for some time her own forewoman. In 1821, after five years' hard work, competition had become so lively in the haberdashery business that the brother and sister had scarcely been able to pay off the purchase-money and keep up the reputation of the house.

Though Sylvie Rogron was at this time but forty, her ugliness, her constant toil, and a peculiarly crabbed

expression, arising as much from the shape of her features as from her anxieties, made her look like a woman of fifty. Jérôme-Denis Rogron, at the age of thirty-eight, had the most idiotic face that ever bent over a counter to a customer. His low forehead, crushed by fatigue, was seamed by three arid furrows. His scanty grey hair, cut very short, suggested the unutterable stupidity of a cold-blooded animal; in the gaze of his blue-grey eyes there was neither fire nor mind. His round, flat face aroused no sympathy, and did not even bring a smile to the lips of those who study the varieties of Parisian physiognomy; it was depressing. And while, like his father, he was short and thick, his shape, not having the coarse obesity of the innkeeper, showed in every detail an absurd flabbiness. His father's excessive redness gave place in him to the flaccid lividness acquired by people who live in airless backshops, in the barred coops that serve as counting-houses, always folding and unfolding skeins of thread, paying or receiving money, harrying clerks, or repeating the same phrases to customers. The small intelligence of this brother and sister had been completely sunk in mastering their business, in debit and credit, and in the study of the rules and customs of the Paris market. Thread, needles, ribbon, pins, buttons, tailors' trimmings, in short, the vast list of articles constituting Paris haberdashery, had filled up their memory. Letters to write and answer, bills and stock-taking, had absorbed all their capabilities.

Outside their line of business they knew absolutely nothing; they did not even know Paris. To them Paris was something spread out round the Rue Saint-Denis. Their narrow nature found its field in their shop. They knew very well how to nag their assistants and shop-girls and find them at fault. Their joy consisted in seeing all their hands as busy on the counters as mice's paws, handling the goods or folding up the pieces. When they heard seven or eight young voices of lads and girls

simpering out the time-honoured phrases with which shop-assistants reply to a customer's remarks, it was a fine day, nice weather. When ethereal blue brought life to Paris, and Parisians out walking thought of no haberdashery but what they wore, 'Bad weather for business,' the silly master would observe. The great secret, which made Rogron the object of his apprentices' admiration, was his art in tying, untying, re-tying, and making up a parcel. Rogron could pack a parcel and look out at what was going on in the street, or keep an eye on his shop to its furthest depths; he had seen everything by the time he handed it to the buyer, saying, 'Madame—nothing more this morning?'

But for his sister, this simpleton would have been ruined. Sylvie had good sense and the spirit of trade. She advised her brother as to his purchases from the manufacturers, and relentlessly sent him off to the other end of France to make a sou of profit on some article. The shrewdness, of which every woman possesses more or less, having no duty to do for her heart, she had utilised it in speculation. Stock to be paid for! this thought was the piston that worked this machine and gave it appalling energy. Rogron was never more than head-assistant; he did not understand his business as a whole; personal interest, the chief motor of the mind, had not carried him forward one step. He often stood dismayed when his sister desired him to sell some article at a loss, foreseeing that it would go out of fashion; and afterwards he guilelessly admired her. He did not reason well or ill; he was incapable of reasoning; but he had sense enough to submit to his sister, and he did so for a reason that had nothing to do with business. 'She is the eldest,' he would say. Physiologists and moralists may possibly find in such a persistently solitary life, reduced to satisfying mere needs, and deprived of money and pleasure in youth, an explanation of the animal expression of face, the weak brain, and idiotic manner

of this haberdasher. His sister had always hindered him marrying, fearing perhaps that she might lose her influence in the house, and seeing a source of expense and ruin in a wife certainly younger, and probably less hideous, than herself.

Stupidity may betray itself in two ways—it is talkative or it is mute. Mute stupidity may be endured; but Rogron's was talkative. The tradesman had fallen into the habit of scolding his assistants, of expatiating to them on the minutiæ of the haberdashery business and selling to 'the trade,' ornamenting his lectures with the flat jokes that constitute the *bagout*, the gab of the shops. (This word *bagout*, used formerly to designate the stereotyped repartee, has given way before the soldier's slang word *blague* or humbug.) Rogron, to whom his little domestic audience were bound to listen, Rogron, very much pleased with himself, had finally adopted a set of phrases of his own. The chatterbox believed himself eloquent. The need for explaining to customers the thing they want, for finding out their wishes, for making them want the thing they do not want, loosens the tongue of the counter-jumper. The retail dealer at last acquires the faculty of pouring out sentences in which words have no meaning, but which answer their purpose. Then he can explain to his customers methods of manufacture unknown to them, and this gives him a sort of short-lived superiority over the purchaser; but apart from the thousand and one explanations necessitated by the thousand and one articles he sells, he is, so far as thought is concerned, like a fish on straw in the sunshine.

Rogron and Sylvie—a pair of machines illicitly baptized—had neither potentially nor actively the feelings which give life to the heart. These two beings were utterly dry and tough, hardened by toil, by privations, by the remembrance of their sufferings during a long and weariful apprenticeship. Neither he nor she had pity for any misfortune. They were not implacable, but impenetrable

with regard to anybody in difficulties. To them virtue, honour, loyalty, every human feeling was epitomised in the regular payment of their accounts. Close-fisted, heartless, and sordidly thrifty, the brother and sister had a terrible reputation among the traders of the Rue Saint-Denis.

But for their visits to Provins, whither they went thrice a year, at times when they could shut the shop for two or three days, they would never have got shop-lads and girls. But old Rogron packed off to his children every unhappy creature intended by its parents to go into trade; he carried on for them a business in apprentices in Provins, where he vaunted with much vanity his children's fortune. The parents, tempted by the remote hope of having their son or daughter well taught and well looked after, and the chance of seeing a child some day step into Rogron junior's business, sent the youth who was in the way to the house kept by the old bachelor and old maid. But as soon as the apprentices, man or maid, for whom the fee of a hundred crowns was always paid, saw any way of escaping from these galleys, they fled with a glee which added to the terrible notoriety of the Rogrons. The indefatigable innkeeper always supplied them with fresh victims.

From the age of fifteen Sylvie Rogron, accustomed to grimace over the counter, had two faces—the amiable mask of the saleswoman and the natural expression of a shrivelled old maid. Her assumed countenance was a marvellous piece of mimicry; she smiled all over; her voice turned soft and insinuating, and held the customers under a commercial spell. Her real face was what she had shown between the two half-opened shutters. It would have scared the bravest of the Cossacks of 1815, though they dearly loved every variety of Frenchwoman.

When the letter came from the Lorrains, the Rogrons, in mourning for their father, had come into possession of the house they had almost stolen from Pierrette's grand-

mother, of the innkeeper's acquired land, and finally of certain sums derived from usurious loans in mortgages on land in the hands of peasant owners whom the old drunkard hoped to dispossess. The charge on the business was paid off. The Rogrons had stock to the value of about sixty thousand francs in the shop, about forty thousand francs in their cash-box or in assets, and the value of their goodwill. Seated on the bench, covered with striped green worsted velvet, and fitted into a square recess behind the cash-desk, with just such another desk opposite for the forewoman, the brother and sister held council as to their plans. Every tradesman hopes to retire. If they realised their whole stock and business, they ought to have about a hundred and fifty thousand francs, without counting their inheritance from old Rogron. Thus by investing in the funds the capital at their disposal, each of them would have three to four thousand francs a year, even if they devoted the price of the business—which would no doubt be paid in instalments—to restoring their paternal home. So they might go to Provins and live there in a house of their own.

Their forewoman was the daughter of a rich farmer at Donnemarie, who was burthened with nine children; thus he was obliged to place them all in business, for his wealth, divided among nine, would be little enough for each. But in five years the farmer lost seven of his children, consequently the forewoman had become an interesting person; so much so, that Rogron had attempted, but vainly, to make her his wife. The young lady manifested an aversion for the master which nullified all his manœuvres. On the other hand, Mademoiselle Sylvie did not encourage the plan; she even opposed her brother's marriage, and wanted rather to have so clever a woman as their successor. Rogron's marriage she postponed till they should be settled at Provins.

No passer-by can understand the motive-power that underlies the cryptogamic lives of certain shopkeepers; as we look at them we wonder, 'On what, and why do they live? What becomes of them? Where did they come from?' We lose ourselves in vacancy as we try to account for them. To discover the little poetry that germinates in these brains and vivifies these existences, we must dig into them; but we soon reach the tufa on which everything rests. The Paris shopkeeper feeds on hopes more or less likely to be realised, and without which he would evidently perish: one dreams of building or managing a theatre, another struggles for the honours of the Mairie; this one has a castle in the air three leagues from Paris, a so-called park, where he plants coloured plaster statues and arranges fountains that look like an end of thread, and spends immense sums; that one longs for promotion to the higher grades of the National Guard. Provins, an earthly paradise, excited in the two haberdashers the fanaticism which the inhabitants of every pretty town in France feel for their home. And to the glory of Champagne, it may be said that this affection is amply justified. Provins, one of the most charming spots in France, rivals Frangistan and the valley of Cashmere; not only has it all the poetry of Saadi, the Homer of Persia, but it also has pharmaceutical treasures for medical science. The crusaders brought roses from Jericho to this delightful valley, where, by some chance, the flowers developed new qualities without losing anything of their colour. And Provins is not only the Persia of France; it might be Baden, Aix, Bath; it has mineral waters.

This is the picture seen year after year, which now and again appeared in a vision to the haberdashers on the muddy pavement of the Rue Saint-Denis.

After crossing the grey flats that lie between la Ferté-Gaucher and Provins—a desert, but a fertile one, a desert of wheat—you mount a hill. Suddenly, at your

feet, you see a town watered by two rivers; at the bottom of the slope spreads a green valley broken by graceful lines and retreating distances. If you come from Paris you take Provins lengthways; you see the everlasting French highroad running along the foot of the hill and close under it, owning its blind man and its beggars, who throw in an accompaniment of lamentable voices when you pause to gaze at this unexpectedly picturesque tract of land. If you arrive from Troyes, you come in from the plain. The castle and the old town, with its rampart, climb the shelves of the hill. The new town lies below.

There are upper and lower Provins; above, a town in the air, with steep streets and fine points of view, surrounded by hollow roads like ravines between rows of walnut-trees, furrowing the narrow hilltop with deep cuttings: a silent town this, clean and solemn, overshadowed by the imposing ruins of the stronghold; then, below, a town of mills, watered by the Voulzie and the Durtain, two rivers of Brie, narrow, sluggish, and deep; a town of inns and trade, of retired tradespeople, traversed by diligences, chaises, and heavy carts. These two towns—or this town—with its historical associations, with the melancholy of its ruins, the gaiety of its valley, its delightful ravines full of unkempt hedgerows and wildflowers, its river terraced with gardens, has so sure a hold on the love of its children that they behave like the sons of Auvergne, of Savoy, of France. Though they leave Provins to seek their fortune, they always come back to it. The phrase, 'To die in one's burrow,' made for rabbits and faithful souls, might be taken by the natives of Provins as their motto.

And so the two Rogrons thought only of their beloved Provins. As he sold thread, the brother saw the old town. While packing cards covered with buttons, he was gazing at the valley. He rolled and unrolled tape, but he was following the gleaming course of the

rivers. As he looked at his pigeon-holes he was climbing the sunk roads whither of old he fled to evade his father's rage, to eat walnuts, and to cram on blackberries. The little Square at Provins above all filled his thoughts; he would beautify the house; he dreamed of the front he would rebuild, the bedrooms, the sitting-room, the billiard-room, the dining-room; then of the kitchen garden, which he would turn into an English garden with a lawn, grottoes, fountains, statues, and what not?

The rooms in which the brother and sister slept on the second floor of the house, three windows wide and six stories high—there are many such in the Rue Saint-Denis—had no furniture beyond what was strictly necessary; but not a soul in Paris had finer furniture than this haberdasher. As he walked in the streets he would stand in the attitude of an ecstatic, looking at the handsome pieces on show, and examining hangings with which he filled his house. On coming home he would say to his sister, 'I saw a thing in such or such a shop that would just do for us!' The next day he would buy another, and invariably he gave up one month the choice of the month before. The revenue would not have paid for his architectural projects; he wanted everything, and always gave the preference to the newest thing. When he studied the balconies of a newly built house, and the doubtful attempts at exterior decoration, he thought the mouldings, sculpture, and ornament quite out of place. 'Ah!' he would say to himself, 'those fine things would look much better at Provins than they do there.' As he digested his breakfast on his doorstep, leaning his back against the shop side, with a hazy eye the haberdasher saw a fantastic dwelling, golden in the sunshine of his dream; he walked in a garden, listening to his fountain as it splashed in a shower of diamonds on a round flag of limestone. He played billiards on his own table; he planted flowers.

When his sister sat, pen in hand, lost in thought, and

forgetting to scold the shopmen, she was seeing herself receiving the townsfolk of Provins, gazing at herself in the tall mirrors of her drawing-room, and wearing astounding caps. Both brother and sister were beginning to think that the atmosphere of the Rue Saint-Denis was unwholesome, and the smell of the mud in the market made them long for the scent of the roses of Provins. They suffered alike from home-sickness and monomania, both thwarted by the necessity for selling their last remnants of thread, reels of silk, and buttons. The promised land of the valley of Provins attracted these Israelites all the more strongly because they had for a long time really suffered, and had crossed with gasping breath the sandy deserts of haberdashery.

The letter from the Lorrains arrived in the middle of a meditation on that beautiful future. The haberdashers scarcely knew their cousin Pierrette Lorrain. The settlement of Auffray's estate, long since, by the old innkeeper, had taken place when they were going into business, and Rogron never said much about his money matters. Having been sent to Paris so young, the brother and sister could hardly remember their aunt Lorrain. It took them an hour of genealogical discussion to recall their aunt, the daughter of their grandfather Auffray's second wife, and their mother's half-sister. They then remembered that Madame Lorrain's mother was the Madame Néraud who had died of grief. They concluded that their grandfather's second marriage had been a disastrous thing for them, the result being the division of Auffray's estate between two families. They had, indeed, heard sundry recriminations from their father, who was always somewhat of the grudging publican. The pair studied the Lorrains' letter through the medium of these reminiscences, which were not in Pierrette's favour. To take charge of an orphan, a girl, a cousin, who in any case would be their heiress in the event of their neither of them marrying,—this was

matter for discussion. The question was regarded from every point of view. In the first place, they had never seen Pierrette. Then it would be very troublesome to have a young girl to look after. Would they not be binding themselves to provide for her? It would be impossible to send her away if they did not like her. Would they not have to find her a husband? And if, after all, Rogron could find 'a shoe to fit him' among the heiresses of Provins, would it not be better to keep all they had for his children? The shoe that would fit her brother, according to Sylvie, was a rich girl, stupid and ugly, who would allow her sister-in-law to rule her. The couple decided that they would refuse.

Sylvie undertook to reply. Business was sufficiently pressing to retard this letter, which she did not deem urgent, and indeed the old maid thought no more about it when the forewoman consented to buy the business and stock-in-trade of the *Sœur de famille*.

Sylvie Rogron and her brother had gone to settle in Provins four years before the time when Brigaut's appearance brought so much interest into Pierrette's life. But the doings of these two persons in the country require a description no less than their life in Paris; for Provins was fated to be as evil an influence for Pierrette as her cousins' commercial antecedents.

When a small tradesman who has come to Paris from the provinces returns to the country from Paris, he inevitably brings with him some notions; presently he loses them in the habits of the place where he settles down, and where his fancies for innovations gradually sink. Hence come those slow, small, successive changes which are gradually scratched by Paris on the surface of country-town life, and which are the essential stamp of the change of a retired shopkeeper into a confirmed provincial. This change is a real distemper. No small tradesman can pass without a shock from perpetual talk to utter silence, from the activity of his Paris life to the stagna-

tion of the country. When the good folks have earned a little money, they spend a certain amount on the passion they have so long been hatching, and work off the last spasms of an energy which cannot be stopped short at will. Those who have never cherished any definite plan, travel, or throw themselves into the political interests of the municipality. Some go out shooting or fishing, and worry their farmers and tenants. Some turn usurers, like old father Rogron, or speculate, like many obscure persons.

The dream of this brother and sister is known to you; they wanted to indulge their magnificent fancy for handling the trowel, for building a delightful house. This fixed idea had graced the Square of lower Provins with the frontage which Brigaut had just been examining, the interior arrangements of the house, and its luxurious furniture. The builder drove never a nail in without consulting the Rogrons, without making them sign the plans and estimates, without explaining in lengthy detail the structure of the object under discussion, where it was made, and the various prices. As to anything unusual, it had always been introduced by Monsieur Tiphaine or Madame Julliard the younger, or Monsieur Garceland, the Maire. Such a resemblance with some wealthy citizen of Provins always carried the day in the builder's favour.

'Oh, if Monsieur Garceland has got one we will have it!' said Mademoiselle Sylvie. 'It must be right; he had good taste.'

'Sylvie, he suggests we should have ovolos in the cornice of the passage.'

'You call that an ovolo?'

'Yes, Mademoiselle.'

'But why? What a queer name! I never heard it before.'

'But you have seen them?'

'Yes.'

'Do you know Latin?'

'No.'

'Well, it means egg-shaped; the ovolo is egg-shaped.'

'You are a queer crew, you architects!' cried Rogron. 'That, no doubt, is the reason you charge so much; you don't throw away your egg-shells!'

'Shall we paint the passage?' asked the builder.

'Certainly not!' cried Sylvie. 'Another five hundred francs!'

'But the drawing-room and the stairs are so nice, it is a pity not to decorate the passage,' said the builder. 'Little Madame Lesourd had hers painted last year.'

'And yet her husband, being crown prosecutor, cannot stay at Provins——'

'Oh! he will be President of the Courts here some day,' said the builder.

'And what do you think is to become of Monsieur Tiphaine then?'

'Monsieur Tiphaine! He has a pretty wife; I am not uneasy about him. Monsieur Tiphaine will go to Paris.'

'Shall we paint the corridor?'

'Yes; the Lesourds will, at any rate, see that we are as good as they are,' said Rogron.

The first year of their residence in Provins was wholly given up to these discussions, to the pleasure of seeing the workmen busy, to the surprises and information of all kinds that they got by it, and to the attempts made by the brother and sister to scrape acquaintance with the most important families in the town.

The Rogrons had never had any kind of society; they had never gone out of their shop; they knew literally no one in Paris, and they thirsted for the pleasures of visiting. On their return they found first Monsieur and Madame Julliard, of the *Ver chinois*, with their children and grand-children; then the Guépin family, or, to be exact, the Guépin clan; the grandson still kept the shop of the *Trois Quenouilles*; and finally, Madame

Guénée, who had sold them the business of the *Sœur de famille*; her three daughters were married in Provins. These three great tribes—the Julliards, the Guépins, and the Guénées—spread over the town like couch-grass on a lawn. Monsieur Garceland, the Maire, was Monsieur Guépin's son-in-law. The Curé, Monsieur l'Abbé Péroux, was own brother to Madame Julliard, who was a Péroux. The President of the Court, Monsieur Tiphaine, was brother to Madame Guénée, who signed herself '*née* Tiphaine.'

The queen of the town was Madame Tiphaine *junior*, the handsome only daughter of Madame Roguin, who was the wealthy wife of a notary of Paris; but he was never mentioned. Delicate, pretty, and clever, married to a provincial husband by the express management of her mother, who would not have her with her, and had taken her from school only a few days before her marriage, Mélanie felt herself an exile at Provins, where she behaved admirably well. She was already rich, and had great expectations. As to Monsieur Tiphaine, his old father had advanced his eldest daughter, Madame Guénée, so much money on account of her share of the property, that an estate worth eight thousand francs a year, at about five leagues from Provins, would fall to the President. Thus the Tiphaines, who had married on twenty thousand francs a year, exclusive of the President's salary and residence, expected some day to have twenty thousand francs a year more. They were not out of luck, people said.

Madame Tiphaine's great and only object in life was to secure her husband's election as deputy. Once in Paris, the deputy would be made judge, and from the Lower Court she promised herself he should soon be promoted to the High Court of Justice. Hence she humoured everybody's vanity, and strove to please; more difficult still, she succeeded. The young woman of two-and-twenty received twice a week, in her handsome house in the old

town, all the citizen class of Provins. She had not yet taken a single awkward step on the slippery ground where she stood. She gratified every conceit, patted every hobby; grave with serious folks, and a girl with girls, of all things a mother with the mothers, cheerful with the young wives, eager to oblige, polite to all; in short, a pearl, a gem, the pride of Provins. She had not yet said the word, but all the electors of the town awaited the day when their dear President should be old enough, to nominate him at once. Every voter, sure of his talents, made him his man and his patron. Oh yes, Monsieur Tiphaine would get on; he would be Keeper of the Seals, and he would promote the interests of Provins.

These were the means by which Madame Tiphaine had been so fortunate as to obtain her ascendency over the little town of Provins. Madame Guénée, Monsieur Tiphaine's sister, after seeing her three daughters married —the eldest to Monsieur Lesourd the public prosecutor, the second to Monsieur Martener the doctor, and the third to Monsieur Auffray the notary—had herself married again Monsieur Galardon, the collector of taxes. Mesdames Lesourd, Martener, and Auffray, and their mother Madame Galardon, regarded the President as the wealthiest and cleverest man in the family. The public prosecutor, Monsieur Tiphaine's nephew by marriage, had the greatest interest in getting his uncle to Paris, so as to be made President himself. Hence these four ladies—for Madame Galardon adored her brother—formed a little court about Madame Tiphaine, taking her opinion and advice on every subject.

Then Monsieur Julliard's eldest son, married to the only daughter of a rich farmer, was taken with a sudden passion, a *grande passion*, secret and disinterested, for the President's wife—that angel dropped from the sky of Paris. Mélanie, very wily, incapable of burthening herself with a Julliard, but perfectly capable of keeping him as an Amadis and making use of his folly, advised him

to start a newspaper to which she was the Egeria. So for two years now Julliard, animated by his romantic passion, had managed a paper and run a diligence for Provins. The newspaper, entitled *La Ruche*, *The Beehive*, included literary, archæological, and medical papers concocted in the family. The advertisements of the district paid the expenses; the subscriptions—about two hundred—were all profit. Melancholy verses sometimes appeared in it, unintelligible to the country people, and addressed 'To Her!!!' with the three points of admiration. Thus the young Julliard couple, singing the merits of Madame Tiphaine, had allied the clan Julliard to that of the Guénées. Thenceforward the President's drawing-room, of course, led the society of the town. The very few aristocrats who lived at Provins met in a single house in the old town, that of the old Comtesse de Bréautey.

During the first six months after their transplanting, the Rogrons, by favour of their old-time connection with the Julliards, the Guépins, and the Guénées, and by emphasising their relationship to Monsieur Auffray the notary—a great grand-nephew of their grandfather's—were received at first by Madame Julliard the elder and Madame Galardon; then, not without difficulty, they found admission to the beautiful Madame Tiphaine's drawing-room. Everybody wished to know something about the Rogrons before inviting them to call. It was a little difficult to avoid receiving tradespeople of the Rue Saint-Denis, natives of Provins, who had come back to spend their money there. Nevertheless, the instinct of society is always to bring together persons of similar fortune, education, manners, acquaintance, and character. Now the Guépins, the Guénées, and the Julliards were of a higher grade, and of older family, than the Rogrons—the children of a money-lending innkeeper who could not be held blameless in his private life, nor with regard to

the Auffray inheritance. Auffray the notary, Madame Galardon's son-in-law, knew all about it; the estate had been wound up in his predecessor's office. Those older merchants, who had retired twelve years since, had found themselves on the level of education, breeding, and manners of the circle to which Madame Tiphaine imparted a certain stamp of elegance, of Paris varnish. Everything was homogeneous; they all understood each other, and knew how to conduct themselves, and talk so as to be agreeable to the rest. They knew each other's characters, and were accustomed to agree. Having been once received by Monsieur Garceland the Maire, the Rogrons flattered themselves that they should soon be on intimate terms with the best society of the town. Sylvie learnt to play boston. Rogron, far too stupid to play any game, twirled his thumbs and swallowed his words when once he had talked about his house. But the words acted like medicine; they seemed to torture him cruelly; he rose, he looked as if he were about to speak; he took fright and sat down again, his lips comically convulsed. Sylvie unconsciously displayed her nature at games. Fractious and complaining whenever she lost, insolently triumphant when she won, contentious and fretful, she irritated her adversaries and her partners, and was a nuisance to everybody.

Eaten up with silly and undisguised envy, Rogron and his sister tried to play a part in a town where a dozen families had formed a net of close meshes; all their interests, all their vanities made, as it were, a slippery floor on which new-comers had to tread very cautiously to avoid running up against something or getting a fall. Allowing that the rebuilding of their house might cost thirty thousand francs, the brother and sister between them would still have ten thousand francs a year. They fancied themselves very rich, bored their acquaintance to death with their talk of future splendour, and so gave the measure of their meanness, their crass ignorance, and

their idiotic jealousy. The evening they were introduced to Madame Tiphaine the beauty—who had already watched them at Madame Garceland's, at her sister-in-law's, Madame Galardon's, and at the elder Madame Julliard's—the queen of Provins said in a confidential tone to Julliard *junior*, who remained alone with her and the President a few minutes after every one was gone—

'You all seem to be much smitten with these Rogrons?'

'I!' said the Amadis of Provins; 'they bore my mother; they overpower my wife; and when Mademoiselle Sylvie was sent, thirty years ago, as an apprentice to my father, even then he could not endure her.'

'But I have a very great mind,' said the pretty lady, putting a little foot on the bar of the fender, 'to give them to understand that my drawing-room is not an inn-parlour.'

Julliard cast up his eyes to the ceiling as much as to say—

'Dear Heaven, what wit, what subtlety!'

'I wish my company to be select, and if I admit the Rogrons it will certainly not be that.'

'They have no heart, no brain, no manners,' said the President. 'When after having sold thread for twenty years, as my sister did, for instance——'

'My dear, your sister would not be out of place in any drawing-room,' said Madame Tiphaine, in a parenthesis.

'If people are so stupid as to remain haberdashers to the end,' the President went on; 'if they do not cast their skin; if they think that "Comtes de Champagne" means "accounts for wine," as the Rogrons did this evening, they should stay at home.'

'They are noisome!' said Julliard. 'You might think there was only one house in Provins. They want to crush us, and, after all, they have hardly enough to live on.'

'If it were only the brother,' said Madame Tiphaine, 'we might put up with him. He is not offensive. Give him a Chinese puzzle, and he would sit quietly in a corner. It would take him the whole winter to put up one pattern. But Mademoiselle Sylvie! What a voice — like a hyena with a cold! What lobster's claws! Do not repeat anything of this, Julliard.'

When Julliard was gone, the little lady said to her husband—

'My dear, there are enough of the natives that I am obliged to receive; these two more would be the death of me; and with your permission, we will deprive ourselves of the pleasure.'

'You are the mistress in your own house,' said the President, 'but we shall make many enemies. The Rogrons will join the Opposition, which hitherto has had no solidity in Provins. That Rogron is already hanging on to Baron Gouraud and Vinet the lawyer.'

'Heh!' said Mélanie, with a smile, 'they will do you service then. Where there are no enemies, there is no triumph. A Liberal conspiracy, an illegal society, a fight of some kind, would bring you into the foreground.'

The President looked at his young wife with a sort of alarmed admiration.

Next day every one at Madame Garceland's said in every one else's ear that the Rogrons had not had a success at Madame Tiphaine's, and her remark about the inn-parlour was much applauded. Madame Tiphaine took a month before returning Mademoiselle Sylvie's visit. This rudeness is much remarked on in the country. Then, at Madame Tiphaine's, when playing boston with the elder Madame Julliard, Sylvie made a most unpleasant scene about a splendid *misère* hand, on which her erewhile mistress caused her to lose—maliciously and on purpose, she declared. Sylvie, who loved to play nasty tricks on others, could never accept a return

in kind. Madame Tiphaine, therefore, set the example of making up the card-parties before the Rogrons arrived, so that Sylvie was reduced to wandering from table to table, watching others play, while they looked at her askance with meaning glances. At old Madame Julliard's, whist was now the game, and Sylvie could not play it. The old maid at last understood that she was an outlaw, but without understanding the reason. She believed herself to be an object of jealousy to everybody.

Ere long the Rogrons were asked nowhere; but they persistently spent their evenings at various houses. Clever people made game of them, without venom, quite mildly, leading them to talk utter nonsense about the *ovolos* in their house, and about a certain cellaret for liqueurs, matchless in Provins. Meanwhile they gave themselves the final blow. Of course, they gave a few sumptuous dinners, as much in return for the civilities they had received as to show off their splendour. The guests came solely out of curiosity. The first dinner was given to Monsieur and Madame Tiphaine, with whom the Rogrons had not once dined; to Messieurs and Mesdames Julliard, father and son, mother and daughter-in-law; to Monsieur Lesourd, Monsieur the Curé, Monsieur and Madame Galardon. It was one of those provincial spreads, where the guests sit at table from five o'clock till nine. Madame Tiphaine had introduced the grand Paris style to Provins, the well-bred guests going away as soon as coffee had been served. She had some friends that evening at home, and tried to steal away, but the Rogrons escorted the couple to the very street; and when they returned, bewildered at having failed to keep the President and his wife, the other guests explained Madame Tiphaine's good taste, and imitated it with a promptitude that was cruel in a country-town.

'They will not see our drawing-room lighted up!' cried Sylvie, 'and candle-light is like rouge to it.'

The Rogrons had hoped to give their guests a

surprise. No one hitherto had been admitted to see this much-talked-of house. And all the frequenters of Madame Tiphaine's drawing-room impatiently awaited her verdict as to the marvels of the '*Palais* Rogron.'

'Well,' said little Madame Martener, 'you have seen the Louvre? Tell us all about it.'

'But all—like the dinner—will not amount to much.'

'What is it like?'

'Well, the front door, of which we were, of course, required to admire the gilt-iron window frames that you all know, opens into a long passage through the house, dividing it unequally, since there is but one window to the street on the right, and two on the left. At the garden end this passage has a glass door to steps leading down to the lawn, a lawn with a decorative pedestal supporting a plaster cast of the Spartacus, painted to imitate bronze. Behind the kitchen the architect has contrived a little pantry under the staircase, which we were not spared seeing. The stair, painted throughout like yellow-veined marble, is a hollow spiral, just like the stairs that in a café lead from the ground floor to the entresol. This trumpery structure of walnut wood, really dangerously light, and with banisters picked out with brass, was displayed to us as one of the seven new wonders of the world. The way to the cellars is beneath.

'On the other side of the passage, looking on the street, is the dining-room, opening by folding doors into the drawing-room, of the same size, but looking on to the garden.'

'So there is no hall?' said Madame Auffray.

'The hall, no doubt, is the long passage where you stand in a draught,' replied Madame Tiphaine. 'We have had the eminently national, liberal, constitutional, and patriotic notion,' she went on, 'of making use only of wood grown in France! In the dining-room, the floor, laid in a neat pattern, is of walnut wood. The

sideboards, table, and chairs are also in walnut. The window curtains are of white cotton with red borders, looped back with vulgar ropes over enormous pegs with elaborate dull-gilt rosettes, the mushroom-like object standing out against a reddish paper. These magnificent curtains run on rods ending in huge scrolls, and are held up by lions' claws in stamped brass, one at the top of each pleat.

'Over one of the sideboards is a regular café clock, draped, as it were, with a sort of napkin in bronze gilt, an idea that quite enchants the Rogrons. They tried to make me admire this device; and I could find nothing better to say than that if it could ever be proper to hang a napkin round a clock face, it was, no doubt, in a dining-room. On this sideboard are two large lamps, like those which grace the counters of grand restaurants. Over the other is a highly decorative barometer, which seems to play an important part in their existence; Rogron gazes at it as he might gaze at his bride-elect. Between the windows the builder has placed a white earthenware stove in a hideously ornate niche. The walls blaze with a splendid paper in red and gold, such as you will see in these same restaurants, and Rogron chose it there no doubt on the spot.

'Dinner was served in a set of white-and-gold china; the dessert service is bright blue with green sprigs; but they opened the china closet to show us that they had another service of stoneware for everyday use. The linen is in large cupboards facing the sideboards. Everything is varnished, shining, new, and harsh in colour. Still, I could accept the dining-room; it has a character of its own which, though not pleasing, is fairly representative of that of the owners; but there is no enduring the five engravings—those black-and-white things against which the Minister of the Interior ought really to get a decree; they represent Poniatowski leaping into the Elster, the Defence of the Barrière de Clichy, Napoleon him-

self pointing a gun, and two prints of Mazeppa, all in gilt frames of a vulgar pattern suitable to the prints, which are enough to make one loathe popularity. Oh! how much I prefer Madame Julliard's pastels representing fruits, those capital pastels which were done in the time of Louis XV., and which harmonise with the nice old dining-room and its dark, rather worm-eaten panels, which are at least characteristic of the country, and suit the heavy family silver, the antique china, and all our habits. The country is provincial; it becomes ridiculous when it tries to ape Paris. You may perhaps retort, "*Vous êtes orfèvre, Monsieur Josse!*"—"You are to the manner born." But I prefer this old room of my father-in-law Tiphaine's, with its heavy curtains of green-and-white damask, its Louis XV. chimney-piece, its scroll pattern pier glass, its old beaded mirrors and time-honoured card-tables; my jars of old Sèvres, old blue, mounted in old gilding; my clock with its impossible flowers, my out-of-date chandelier, and my tapestried furniture, to all the splendour of their drawing-room.'

'What is it like?' said Monsieur Martener, delighted with the praise of the country so ingeniously brought in by the pretty Parisienne.

'The drawing-room is a fine red—as red as Mademoiselle Sylvie when she is angry at losing a *misère*.'

'Sylvie-red,' said the President, and the word took its place in the vocabulary of the district.

'The window-curtains—red! the furniture—red! the chimney-piece—red marble veined with yellow! the candelabra and clock—red marble veined with yellow, and mounted in a heavy vulgar style; Roman lamp-brackets supported on Greek foliage! From the top of the clock a lion stares down on you, stupidly, as the Rogrons stare; a great good-natured lion, the ornamental lion so called, which will long continue to dethrone real lions; he spends his life clutching a black ball exactly like a deputy of the left. Perhaps it is a Constitutional

allegory. The dial of this clock is an extraordinary piece of work.

'The chimney glass is framed with appliqué ornaments, which look poor and cheap, though they are a novelty. But the upholsterer's genius shines most in a panel of red stuff of which the radiating folds all centre in a rosette in the middle of the chimney-board—a romantic poem composed expressly for the Rogrons, who display it with ecstasy. From the ceiling hangs a chandelier, carefully wrapped in a green cotton shroud, and with reason; it is in the very worst taste, raw-toned bronze, with even more detestable tendrils of brown gold. Under it a round tea-table of marble, with more yellow than ever in the red, displays a shining metal tray, on which glitter cups of painted china—such painting!—arranged round a cut-glass sugar-basin, so bold in style that our grandchildren will open their eyes in amazement at the gilt rings round the edge and the diamond pattern on the sides, like a mediæval quilted doublet, and at the tongs for taking the sugar, which probably no one will ever use.

'This room is papered with red flock-paper imitating velvet, divided into panels by a beading of gilt brass, finished at the corners with enormous palms. A chromo-lithograph hangs on each panel, framed most elaborately in plaster casting of garlands to imitate fine wood-carving. The furniture of elm-root, upholstered with satin-cloth, classically consists of two sofas, two large easy-chairs, six armchairs, and six light chairs. The console is graced by an alabaster vase, called *à la Medicis*, under a glass shade, and by the much-talked-of liqueur-case. We were told often enough that "there is not such another in Provins." In each window bay, hung with splendid red silk curtains and lace curtains besides, stands a card-table. The carpet is Aubusson; the Rogrons have not failed to get hold of the crimson ground with medallions of flowers, the vulgarest of all the common patterns.

'The room looks uninhabited; there are no books or prints—none of the little things that furnish a table,' and she looked at her own table covered with fashionable trifles, albums, and the pretty toys that were given her. 'There are no flowers, none of the little nothings that fade and are renewed. It is all as cold and dry as Mademoiselle Sylvie. Buffon is right in saying that the style is the man, and certainly drawing-rooms have a style!'

Pretty Madame Tiphaine went on with her description by epigrams; and from this specimen, it is easy to imagine the rooms in which the brother and sister really lived on the first floor, which they also displayed to their guests. Still, no one could conceive of the foolish expenses into which the cunning builder had dragged the Rogrons; the mouldings of the doors, the elaborate inside shutters, the plaster ornaments on the cornices, the fancy painting, the brass-gilt knobs and bells, the ingenious smoke-consuming fireplaces, the contrivances for the prevention of damp, the sham inlaid wood on the staircase, the elaborate glass and smith's work—in short, all the fancy-work which adds to the cost of building, and delights the common mind, had been lavished without stint.

No one would go to the Rogrons' evenings; their pretensions were still-born. There were abundant reasons for refusing; every day was taken up by Madame Garceland, Madame Galardon, the two Julliard ladies, Madame Tiphaine, the Sous-préfet, etc. The Rogrons thought that giving dinners was all that was needed to get into society; they secured some young people who laughed at them, and some diners-out, such as are to be found in every part of the world; but serious people quite gave them up. Sylvie, alarmed at the clear loss of forty thousand francs swallowed up without any return in the house she called her dear house, wanted to recover the sum by economy. So she soon ceased to

give dinners that cost from thirty to forty francs, without the wine, as they failed to realise her hope of forming a circle—a thing as difficult to create in the country as it is in Paris. Sylvie dismissed her cook, and hired a country girl for the coarser work. She herself cooked 'to amuse herself.'

Thus, fourteen months after their return home, the brother and sister had drifted into a life of isolation and idleness. Her banishment from 'the world' had roused in Sylvie's soul an intense hatred of the Tiphaines, Julliards, Auffrays, and Garcelands—in short, of everybody in Provins society, which she stigmatised as a *clique*, with which she was on the most distant terms. She would gladly have set up a rival circle; but the second-rate citizen class was composed entirely of small tradespeople, never free but on Sundays and holidays; or of persons in ill-odour, like Vinet the lawyer and Doctor Néraud; or of rank Bonapartists, like General Gouraud; and Rogron very rashly made friends with these, though the upper set had vainly warned him against them. The brother and sister were obliged to sit together by the fire of their dining-room stove, talking over their business, the faces of their customers, and other equally amusing matters.

The second winter did not come to an end without their being almost crushed by its weight of dulness. They had the greatest difficulty in spending the hours of their day. As they went to bed at night, they thought, 'One more over!' They spun out the morning by getting up late and dressing slowly. Rogron shaved himself every morning; he examined his face and described to his sister the changes he fancied he noted in it; he squabbled with the maid over the temperature of the hot water; he wandered into the garden to see if the flowers were sprouting; he ventured down to the river-bank, where he had built a summer-house; he examined

the woodwork of the house. Had it warped? Had the settling split any of the panels? Was the paint wearing well? Then he came in to discuss his anxieties as to a sick hen, or some spot where the damp had left stains, talking to his sister, who affected hurry in laying the table while she scolded the maid. The barometer was the most useful article in the house to Rogron; he consulted it for no reason, tapped it familiarly like a friend, and then said, 'Vile weather!' to which his sister would reply, 'Pooh, the weather is quite seasonable.' If anybody called, he would boast of the excellence of this instrument.

Their breakfast took up some little time. How slowly did these two beings masticate each mouthful. And their digestion was perfect; they had no cause to fear cancer of the stomach. By reading the *Ruche* and the *Constitutionnel* they got on to noon. They paid a third of the subscription to the Paris paper with Vinet and Colonel Gouraud. Rogron himself carried the paper to the Colonel, who lived in the Square, lodging with Monsieur Martener; the soldier's long stories were an immense delight to him. Rogron could only wonder why the Colonel was considered dangerous. He was such an idiot as to speak to him of the ostracism under which he lived, and retail the sayings of the 'clique.' God only knows what the Colonel—who feared no one, and was as redoubtable with the pistol as with the sword—had to say of 'la Tiphaine' and 'her Julliard,' of the ministerial officials of the upper town—'men brought over by foreigners, capable of anything to stick in their places, cooking the lists of votes at the elections to suit themselves,' and the like.

At about two o'clock Rogron sallied forth for a little walk. He was quite happy when a shopkeeper, standing at his door, stopped him with a 'How d'ye do, Père Rogron?' He gossiped, and asked, 'What news in the town?' heard and repeated scandal, or the tittle-tattle of

Provins. He walked to the upper town, or in the sunk roads, according to the weather. Sometimes he met other old men airing themselves in like manner. Such meetings were happy events.

There were at Provins certain men who were out of conceit with the life of Paris, learned and modest men, living with their books. Imagine Rogron's frame of mind when he listened to a supernumerary judge named Desfondrilles, more of an archæologist than a lawyer, saying to a man of education, old Monsieur Martener, the doctor's father, as he pointed to the valley—

'Will you tell me why the idlers of all Europe flock to Spa rather than to Provins, when the waters of Provins are acknowledged to be superior by the whole French faculty of medicine, and to have effects and an energy worthy of the medical properties of our roses?'

'What do you expect?' replied the man of the world, 'it is one of the caprices of Caprice, and just as inexplicable. The wines of Bordeaux were unknown a hundred years ago. Maréchal Richelieu, one of the grandest figures of the last century, the Alcibiades of France, was made governor of Guyenne. His chest was delicate—the world knew why—the wine of the country strengthened and restored him to health. Bordeaux at once made a hundred millions of francs a year, and the Marshal extended the Bordeaux district as far as Angoulême and as far as Cahors, in short, to forty leagues in every direction! Who knows where the vineyards of Bordeaux end?—And there is no equestrian statue of the Marshal at Bordeaux!'

'Ah! if such an event should take place at Provins in this century or the next,' Monsieur Desfondrilles went on, 'I hope that either on the little Square in the lower town, or on the castle, or somewhere in the upper town, some bas-relief would be seen representing the head of Monsieur Opoix, the rediscoverer of the mineral waters of Provins!'

'But, my dear sir, it would perhaps be impossible to rehabilitate Provins,' said old Monsieur Martener. 'The town is bankrupt.'

At this Rogron opened his eyes wide, and exclaimed—'What!'

'Provins was formerly a capital which, in the twelfth century, held its own as a rival to Paris, when the Counts of Champagne held their court here as King René held his in Provence,' replied the man of learning. 'In those days civilisation, pleasure, poetry, elegance, women—in short, all the splendour of social life was not exclusively restricted to Paris. Towns find it as hard as houses of business to rise again from ruin. Nothing is left to Provins but the fragrance of its historic past and that of its roses—and a sous-préfecture.'

'Oh! to think what France might be if she still had all her feudal capitals!' said Desfondrilles. 'Can our sous-préfets fill the place of the poetic, gallant, and warlike race of Thibault, who made Provins what Ferrara was in Italy, what Weimar was in Germany, and what Munich would like to be in our day?'

'Provins was a capital?' asked Rogron.

'Why, where have you dropped from?' said Desfondrilles the archæologist.

The lawyer struck the pavement of the upper town where they were standing with his stick: 'Do not you know,' he cried, 'that all this part of Provins is built on crypts?'

'Crypts?'

'Yes, to be sure, crypts of unaccountable loftiness and extent. They are like cathedral aisles, full of pillars.'

'Monsieur Desfondrilles is writing a great antiquarian work in which he intends to describe these singular structures,' said old Martener, seeing the lawyer mount his hobby.

Rogron came home enchanted to think that his house stood in this valley. The crypts of Provins kept him

occupied for five or six days in exploring them, and for several evenings afforded a subject of conversation to the old couple. Thus Rogron generally picked up something about old Provins, about the intermarriages of the families, or some stale political news which he retailed to his sister. And a hundred times over in the course of his walk—several times even of the same person—he would ask, 'Well, what is the news? What has happened lately?' When he came in he threw himself on a sofa in the drawing-room as if he were tired out, but really he was only weary of his own weight.

He got on to dinner-time by going twenty times to and fro between the drawing-room and the kitchen, looking at the clock, opening and shutting doors. So long as the brother and sister spent the evenings in other houses they got through the hours till bedtime, but after they were reduced to staying at home the evening was a desert to traverse. Sometimes people on their way home, after spending the evening out, as they crossed the little Place, heard sounds in the Rogrons' house as if the brother were murdering the sister; they recognised them as the terrific yawns of a haberdasher driven to bay. The two machines had nothing to grind with their rusty wheels, so they creaked.

The brother talked of marrying, but with a sense of despair. He felt himself old and worn; a wife terrified him. Sylvie, who understood the need for a third person in the house, then remembered their poor cousin, for whom no one in Provins had ever inquired, for everybody supposed that little Madame Lorrain and her daughter were both dead. Sylvie Rogron never lost anything; she was too thoroughly an old maid to mislay anything, whatever it might be. She affected to have found the letter from the Lorrains so as to make it natural that she should mention Pierrette to her brother, and he was almost happy at the possibility of having a little girl about the house. Sylvie wrote to the old

Lorrains in a half-business-like, half-affectionate tone, attributing the delay in her answer to the winding up of their affairs, to their move back to Provins, and settling there. She affected to be anxious to have her little cousin with her, allowing it to be understood that if Monsieur Rogron should not marry, Pierrette would some day inherit twelve thousand francs a year. It would be needful to have been, like Nebuchadnezzar, to some extent a wild beast, shut up in a cage in a beast-garden with nothing to prey on but butcher's meat brought in by the keeper, or else a retired tradesman with no shop-clerks to nag, to imagine the impatience with which the brother and sister awaited their cousin Lorrain. Three days after the despatch of the letter they were already wondering when the child would arrive.

Sylvie discerned in her so-called generosity to her penniless cousin a means of changing the views of Provins society with regard to herself. She called on Madame Tiphaine, who had stricken them with her disapproval, and who aimed at creating an upper class at Provins, like that at Geneva, and blew the trumpet to announce the advent of her cousin Pierrette, the child of Colonel Lorrain, pitying her woes, and congratulating herself as a lucky woman on having a pretty young heiress to introduce in society.

'You have been a long time discovering her,' remarked Madame Tiphaine, who sat enthroned on a sofa by her fireside.

Madame Garceland, in a few words spoken in an undertone during a deal, revived the story of the Auffray property. The notary related the innkeeper's iniquities.

'Where is the poor little thing?' asked the President politely.

'In Brittany,' said Rogron.

'But Brittany is a wide word!' remarked Monsieur Lesourd, the public prosecutor.

'Her grandfather and grandmother wrote to us.—When was it, my dear?' asked Rogron.

Sylvie, absorbed in asking Madame Garceland where she had bought the stuff for her dress, did not foresee the effect of her answer, and said, 'Before we sold our business.'

'And you answered three days ago, Mademoiselle Sylvie!' exclaimed the notary.

Sylvie turned as red as the hottest coals in the fire.

'We wrote to the Institution of Saint-Jacques,' replied Rogron.

'There is a sort of asylum there for old people,' said a lawyer, who had been supernumerary judge at Nantes. 'But she cannot be there, for they only take in persons who are past sixty.'

'She is there with her grandmother Lorrain,' said Rogron.

'She had a little money, the eight thousand francs left her by your father—no, I mean your grandfather,' said the notary, blundering intentionally.

'Indeed!' said Rogron, looking stupid, and not understanding this sarcasm.

'Then you knew nothing of your first cousin's fortune or position?' asked the President.

'If Monsieur Rogron had known it, he would not have left her in a place which is no more than a respectable workhouse,' said the judge severely. 'I remember now that a house belonging to Monsieur and Madame Lorrain was sold at Nantes under an execution; and Mademoiselle Lorrain lost her claims, for I was the commissioner in charge.'

The notary spoke of Colonel Lorrain, who, if he were alive, would indeed be astonished to think of his child being in an institution like that of Saint-Jacques. The Rogrons presently withdrew, thinking the world very spiteful. Sylvie perceived that her news had had no success; she had ruined herself in everybody's opinion; henceforth

she had no hope of making her way in the higher society of Provins.

From that day the Rogrons no longer dissembled their hatred of the great citizen-families of Provins, and of all their adherents. The brother now repeated all the Liberal fables which Lawyer Vinet and Colonel Gouraud had crammed him with about the Tiphaines, the Guénées, the Garcelands, the Guépins, and the Julliards.

'I tell you what, Sylvie, I don't see why Madame Tiphaine should turn a cold shoulder on the Rue Saint-Denis : the best of her beauty was made there. Madame Roguin, her mother, is a cousin of the Guillaumes of the *Cat and Racket*, who gave over their business to their son-in-law Joseph Lebas. Her father is that notary, that Roguin, who failed in 1819, and ruined the Birotteaus. So Madame Tiphaine's money is stolen wealth ; for what is a notary's wife who takes her own settlement out of the fire and allows her husband to become a fraudulent bankrupt? A pretty thing indeed! Ah! I understand! She got her daughter married to live here at Provins through her connection with the banker du Tillet. And these people are proud!—Well! However, that is what the world is!'

On the day when Denis Rogron and his sister Sylvie thus broke out in abuse of the clique, they had, without knowing it, become persons of importance, and were on the high road to having some society ; their drawing-room was on the point of becoming a centre of interests which only needed a stage. The retired haberdasher assumed historical and political dignity, for, still without knowing it, he gave strength and unity to the hitherto unstable elements of the Liberal party at Provins. And this was the way of it : The early career of the Rogrons had been anxiously observed by Colonel Gouraud and the advocate Vinet, who had been thrown together by their isolation and their agreement of ideas. These two men professed equal patriotism, and for the same reasons

—they wanted to acquire importance. But though they were anxious to be leaders, they lacked followers. The Liberals of Provins comprised an old soldier who sold lemonade; an innkeeper; Monsieur Cournant, a notary, Monsieur Auffray's rival; Monsieur Néraud, a physician, Doctor Martener's rival; and some independent persons, farmers scattered about the neighbourhood, and holders of national stock. The Colonel and the lawyer, glad to attract an idiot whose money might help them in their manœuvres, who would support their subscriptions, who, in some cases, would take the bull by the horns, and whose house would be useful as a town-hall for the party, took advantage of the Rogrons' hostility towards the aristocrats of the place. The Colonel, the lawyer, and Rogron had a slight bond in their joint subscription to the *Constitutionnel*; it would not be difficult for the Colonel to make a Liberal of the ex-haberdasher, though Rogron knew so little of political history that he had not heard of the exploits of Sergeant Mercier; he thought he was a friend and brother.

The impending arrival of Pierrette hastened the hatching of certain covetous dreams to which the ignorance and folly of the old bachelor and old maid had given rise. The Colonel, seeing that Sylvie had lost all chance of getting her foot into the circle of the Tiphaines, had an idea. Old soldiers have seen so many horrors in so many lands, so many naked corpses grimacing hideously on so many battle-fields, that an ugly face has no terrors for them, so the Colonel took steady aim at the old maid's fortune. This officer, a short, fat man, wore rings in his ears, which were already graced by bushy tufts of hair. His floating grey whiskers were such as in 1799 had been called 'fins.' His large, good-natured, red face was somewhat frost-bitten, as were those of all who escaped at the Beresina. His huge, prominent stomach had the flattened angle below characteristic of an old cavalry officer; Gouraud had

commanded the second regiment of Hussars. His grey moustache covered a huge mouth—a perfect trap—the only word to describe that abyss; he did not eat, he devoured! A sword-cut had shortened his nose. His speech was in consequence thick and deeply nasal, like that ascribed to Capuchin friars. His hands, which were small, short, and broad, were such as make a woman say, 'You have the hands of a thorough scamp.' His legs, below such a huge body, looked frail. Within this active but clumsy body lay a cunning spirit, entire experience of life and things, hidden under the apparent carelessness of a soldier, and utter contempt for the conventionalities of society. Colonel Gouraud had the pension of the Cross of the Legion of Honour, and two thousand four hundred francs a year as half-pay—a thousand crowns a year in all for his whole income.

The lawyer, tall and lean, had no talent but his political opinions, and no income but the meagre profits of his business. At Provins solicitors plead their own cases. In view of his opinions, the Court listened with small favour to Maître Vinet; and the most Liberal farmers, when entangled in lawsuits, would rely on an attorney in favour with the Bench rather than employ Vinet. This man was said to have led astray a rich girl living near Coulommiers, and to have compelled her parents to let her marry him. His wife was one of the Chargebœufs, an old family of nobles in la Brie, who took their name from the exploit of a squire in Saint Louis' expedition to Egypt. She had incurred her parents' displeasure, and they, to Vinet's knowledge, had arranged to leave their whole fortune to their eldest son, charged, no doubt, with a reversion in favour of his sister's children. Thus this man's first ambitious scheme came to nothing. The lawyer, soon haunted by poverty, and ashamed of not having enough to enable his wife to keep up appearances, had made vain efforts to get his foot into a ministerial career; but the rich branch of the

Chargebœufs refused to assist him. These Royalists, were strictly moral, and disapproved of a compulsory marriage; besides, their would-be relation's name was Vinet; how could they favour any one so common? So the lawyer was handed on from one branch to another when he tried to utilise his wife's interest with her relations. Madame Vinet found no assistance but from one of the family, a widowed Madame Chargebœuf, with a daughter, quite poor, who lived at Troyes. And a day came when Vinet remembered the kind reception his wife met with from this lady.

Rejected by the whole world, full of hatred of his wife's family, of the Government which refused him an appointment, and of the society of Provins, which would have nothing to say to him, Vinet accepted his poverty. His venom fermented and gave him energy to endure. He became a Liberal on perceiving that his fortune was bound up with the triumph of the Opposition, and vegetated in a wretched little house in the upper town, which his wife seldom quitted. This girl, born to a better fate, lived absolutely alone in her home with her one child. There are cases of poverty nobly met and cheerfully endured; but Vinet, eaten up by ambition, and feeling that he had wronged a young creature, cherished a dark indignation; his conscience expanded to admit every means to success. His face, still young, changed for the worse. People were sometimes terrified in Court at the sight of his flat viperine head, with its wide mouth, and eyes that glittered through his spectacles; at hearing his sharp, shrill, rasping voice, that wrung their nerves. His muddy complexion, patchy with sickly hues of yellow and green, revealed his suppressed ambitions, his perpetual mortifications and hidden penury. He could argue and harangue; he had no lack of point and imagery; he was learned and crafty. Accustomed to indulge his imagination for the sake of rising by hook or by crook, he might have made a politician. A man

who hesitates at nothing so long as it is legal is a strong man, and in this lay Vinet's strength.

This coming athlete of parliamentary debate—one of the men who were to proclaim the supremacy of the House of Orleans—had a disastrous influence over Pierrette's fate. At present he wanted to provide himself with a weapon by founding a newspaper at Provins. After having studied the Rogrons from afar, with the assistance of the Colonel, he ended by reckoning on the brother. And this time he reckoned with his host; his poverty was to come to an end after seven dolorous years, during which more than one day had come round without bread. On the day when Gouraud announced to Vinet, on the little Square, that the Rogrons had broken with the citizen aristocracy and official circles of the old town, the lawyer nudged him significantly in the ribs.

'This wife or that, ugly or handsome, it must be all the same to you,' said he. 'You should marry Mademoiselle Rogron, and then we could get something done here——'

'I was thinking of it. But they have sent for the daughter of poor Colonel Lorrain—their heiress,' said Gouraud.

'You could make them leave you their money by will. You would have a very nicely fitted house.'

'And the child, after all! Well, we shall see,' said the Colonel, with a jocose and deeply villainous leer, which showed a man of Vinet's temper how small a thing a little girl was in the eyes of this old soldier.

Since her grandparents had gone into the asylum where they were forlornly ending their days, Pierrette, young and full of pride, was so dreadfully miserable at living there on charity, that she was happy to learn that she had some rich connections. On hearing that she was leaving, Brigaut, the Major's son, the companion of

W. Boucher

Pierrette and he-- had sketched their childish dreams on the veil of the future (p. 53)
Drawn and Etched by W. Boucher.

her childhood, who was now a joiner's apprentice at Nantes, came to give her the money needful for her journey by coach—sixty francs, all the savings of his odd earnings painfully hoarded; Pierrette accepted it with the sublime indifference of true friendship, showing that she, in similar circumstances, would have been hurt by thanks. Brigaut had gone every Sunday to Saint-Jacques to play with Pierrette, and to comfort her. The sturdy young workman had already gone through his delightful apprenticeship to the perfect and devoted care that we give to the object of our involuntary choice and affection. More than once ere now, Pierrette and he, on a Sunday, sitting in a corner of the garden, had sketched their childish dreams on the veil of the future; the young craftsman, mounted on his plane, travelled round the world, making a fortune for Pierrette, who waited for him.

So, in the month of October 1824, when Pierrette had almost completed her eleventh year, she was placed in the care of the guard of the diligence from Nantes to Paris by the two old people and the young apprentice, all three dreadfully sad. The guard was requested to put her into the coach for Provins, and to take great care of her. Poor Brigaut! he ran after the diligence like a dog, looking at his dear Pierrette as long as he could. In spite of the child's signals, he ran on for a league beyond the town, and when he was exhausted, his eyes sent a last tearful glance at Pierrette, who cried when she could see him no more. Pierrette put her head out of the window, and discerned her friend standing squarely, and watching the heavy vehicle that left him behind.

The Lorrains and Brigaut had so little knowledge of life that the little Bretonne had not a sou left when she arrived in Paris. The guard, to whom the child prattled of rich relations, paid her expenses at an inn in Paris, made the guard of the Troyes coach repay him, and

desired him to deliver Pierrette to her family and collect the debt, exactly as if she were a parcel by carrier.

Four days after leaving Nantes, at about nine o'clock one Monday evening, a kind, burly old guard of the Messageries Royales took Pierrette by the hand, and, while the coach was unloading in the High Street such passengers and parcels as were to be deposited at Provins, he led her, with no luggage but two frocks, two pairs of stockings, and two shifts, to the house pointed out to him by the office clerk as that of Mademoiselle Rogron.

'Good morning, Mademoiselle, and gents all,' said the guard. 'I have brought you a cousin of yours, and here she be, and a pretty dear too. You have forty-seven francs to pay. Though your little girl has no weight of baggage, please to sign my way-book.'

Mademoiselle Sylvie and her brother gave way to their delight and astonishment.

'Begging your pardon,' said the guard, 'my coach is waiting—sign my sheet and give me forty-seven francs and sixty centimes, and what you please for me and the guard from Nantes, for we have taken as much care of her as if she were our own. We have paid out for her bed and food, her place in the coach here, and other little things.'

'Forty-seven francs and twelve sous?' exclaimed Sylvie.

'You're never going to beat me down?' cried the guard.

'But where is the invoice?' said Rogron.

'The invoice!—Here is my way-bill.'

'You can talk afterwards, pay now!' said Sylvie to her brother; 'you see, you cannot help paying.'

Rogron went to fetch forty-seven francs twelve sous.

'And nothing for us—for my pal and me?' said the guard.

Sylvie produced a two-franc piece from the depths of her old velvet bag, where her keys lurked in bunches.

'I have brought you a cousin of yours, and here she be
Drawn and Etched by W. Boucher.

'Thank you—keep it,' said the man. 'We would rather have looked after the little girl for her own sake.' He took up his sheet and went out, saying to the servant girl: 'A nice place this is! There are crocodiles of that sort without going to Egypt for 'em.'

'Those people are horribly coarse!' said Sylvie, who had heard his speech.

'Dame! they took care of the child,' replied Adèle, with her hands on her hips.

'We are not obliged to live with him,' said Rogron.

'Where is she to sleep?' asked the maid.

Such was the reception that met Pierrette Lorrain on her arrival at her cousins' house, while they looked at her with a bewildered air. She was flung on their hands like a parcel, with no transition between the wretched room in which she had lived with her grandparents and her cousins' dining-room, which struck her as palatial. She stood there mute and shy. To any one but these retired haberdashers, the little Bretonne would have been adorable in her frock of coarse blue serge, a pink cotton apron, her blue stockings, thick shoes, and white kerchief; her little red hands were covered by knitted mittens of red wool edged with white that the guard had bought for her. Her little Brittany cap, which had been washed in Paris—it had got tumbled in the course of the journey from Nantes—really looked like a glory round her bright face. This native cap, made of fine cambric, with a stiff lace border ironed into flat pleats, deserves a description, it is so smart and so simple. The light, filtered through the muslin and lace, casts a half shadow, a twilight softness, on the face; it gives it the virginal grace which painters try to find on their palettes, and which Léopold Robert has succeeded in lending to the Raphael-like face of the woman holding a child in his picture of the *Reapers*. Within this setting of broken lights shone an artless rose and white face, beaming with vigorous health. The heat of the room

brought the blood to her head, and it suffused the edge of her tiny ears with fire, tinging her lips and the tip of a finely cut nose, while by contrast it made her bright complexion look whiter than before.

'Well, have you nothing to say to us?' said Sylvie. 'I am your cousin Sylvie, and that is your cousin Denis.'

'Are you hungry?' asked Rogron.

'When did you leave Nantes?' asked Sylvie.

'She is dumb,' said Rogron.

'Poor child, she has very few clothes to her back!' observed sturdy Adèle, as she untied the bundle wrapped in a handkerchief belonging to old Lorrain.

'Kiss your cousin,' said Sylvie. Pierrette kissed Rogron.

'Yes, kiss your cousin,' said Rogron. Pierrette kissed Sylvie.

'She is scared by the journey, poor little thing; perhaps she is sleepy,' said Adèle.

Pierrette felt a sudden and invincible aversion for her two relations, a feeling she had never before known. Sylvie and the maid went to put the little girl to bed in the room on the second floor where Brigaut was to see the cotton curtain. There were in this attic a small bed with a pole painted blue, from which hung a cotton curtain, a chest of drawers of walnut wood, with no marble top, a smaller table of the same wood, a looking-glass, a common bed-table, and three wretched chairs. The walls and sloping roof to the front were covered with a cheap blue paper flowered with black. The floor was painted and waxed, and struck cold to the feet. There was no carpet but a thin bedside rug made of selvages. The chimney-shelf, of cheap marble, was graced with a mirror, two candlesticks of copper gilt, and a vulgar alabaster vase with two pigeons drinking to serve as handles; this Sylvie had had in her room in Paris.

'Shall you be comfortable here, child?' asked Sylvie.

'Oh! it is beautiful!' replied the little girl in her sil ··· treble.

'She is not hard to please,' muttered the sturdy peasant woman to herself. 'I had better warm the bed, I suppose?' she asked.

'Yes,' said Sylvie, 'the sheets may be damp.'

Adèle brought a head kerchief of her own when she came up with the warming-pan; and Pierrette, who had hitherto slept in sheets of coarse Brittany linen, was amazed at the fine, soft cotton sheets. When the little girl was settled and in bed, Adèle, as she went downstairs, could not help exclaiming, 'All her things put together are not worth three francs, Mademoiselle!'

Since adopting her system of strict economy, Sylvie always made the servant sit in the dining-room, so as to have but one lamp and one fire. When Colonel Gouraud and Vinet came, Adèle withdrew to her kitchen. Pierrette's arrival kept them talking for the rest of the evening.

'We must get her some clothes to-morrow,' said Sylvie. 'She has hardly a stitch.'

'She has no shoes but those thick ones she had on, and they weigh a pound,' said Adèle.

'They wear them so in those parts,' said Rogron.

'How she looked at the room, which is none so fine neither, for a cousin of yours, Mademoiselle!'

'So much the better; hold your tongue. You see she is delighted with it.'

'Lord above us! what shifts! They must rub her skin raw. But none of these things are of any use,' said Adèle, turning out the contents of Pierrette's bundle.

Till ten o'clock master, mistress, and maid were busy deciding of what stuff and at what price the shifts should be made, how many pairs of stockings and of what quality, and how many under-petticoats would be needed, and calculating the cost of Pierrette's wardrobe.

'You will not get off for less than three hundred

francs,' said Rogron to his sister, as he carried the price of each article in his head from long practice, and added up the total from memory.

'Three hundred francs!' exclaimed Sylvie.

'Yes, three hundred; work it out yourself.'

The brother and sister began again, and made it three hundred francs without the sewing.

'Three hundred francs at one cast of the net!' cried Sylvie, who went to bed on the idea so ingeniously expressed by this proverbial figure of speech.

Pierrette was one of those children of love whom love has blessed with tenderness, cheerfulness, brightness, generosity, and devotedness; nothing had as yet chilled or crushed her heart; it was almost wildly sensitive, and the way she was received by her relations weighed on it painfully. Though Brittany had to her been a home of poverty, it had also been a home of affection. Though the old Lorrains were the most unskilful traders, they were the simplest, most loving, most caressing souls in the world, as all disinterested people are. At Pen-Hoël their little grand-daughter had had no teaching but that of nature. Pierrette went as she would in a boat on the pools, she ran about the village or the fields with her companion Jacques Brigaut, exactly like Paul and Virginia. Both the children, spoiled and petted by every one, and as free as the air, ran after the thousand joys of childhood; in summer they went to watch the fishermen, they caught insects, plucked flowers, and gardened; in winter they made slides, built smart snow-palaces and snow-men, or made snowballs to pelt each other. They were everywhere welcome; everybody smiled on them.

When it was time that they should learn something, misfortunes came. Jacques, left destitute by his father's death, was apprenticed by his relations to a cabinet-maker, and maintained by charity, as Pierrette was soon after in the asylum of Saint-Jacques. But even in this

almshouse, pretty little Pierrette had been made much of, loved, and kindly treated by all. The child, thus accustomed to so much affection, no longer found, in the home of these longed-for and wealthy relations, the look, the tone, the words, the manner which she had hitherto met with in every one, even in the guards of the diligences. Thus her amazement, already great, was complicated by the changed moral atmosphere into which she had been plunged. The heart can turn suddenly cold and hot as the body can. The poor child longed to cry without knowing what for. She was tired, and she fell asleep.

Accustomed to rise very early, like all country-bred children, Pierrette awoke next morning two hours before the cook. She dressed, trotted about her room over her cousin's head, looked out on the little Square, and was going downstairs; she was astonished at the splendour of the staircase; she examined every detail—the rosettes, the brass-work, the mouldings, the painting, etc. Then she went down; she could not open the garden door, so she came up again; went down once more when Adèle was about, and sprang into the garden. She took possession of it, ran to the river, was amazed by the summer-house, went into the summer-house; she had enough to see and wonder at in all she saw till her cousin Sylvie was up. During breakfast Sylvie said to her—

'So it was you, little bird, who were trotting up and downstairs at daybreak, and making such a noise? You woke me so completely that I could not get to sleep again. You must be very quiet, very good, and learn to play without making a sound. Your cousin does not like noise?'

'And you must take care about your feet,' said Rogron. 'You went into the summer-house with muddy shoes, and left your footsteps printed on the floor. Your cousin likes everything to be clean. A great girl like you ought to be cleanly. Were you not taught to be

clean in Brittany? To be sure, when I went there to buy flax it was dreadful to see what savages they were! —She has a fine appetite at any rate,' said Rogron, turning to his sister; 'you might think she had not seen food these three days.'

And so, from the very first, Pierrette felt hurt by her cousins' remarks, hurt without knowing why. Her frank and upright nature, hitherto left to itself, had never been used to reflect; incapable, therefore, of understanding wherein her cousins were wrong, she was doomed to tardy enlightenment through suffering.

After breakfast, the couple, delighted by Pierrette's astonishment, and eager to enjoy it, showed her their fine drawing-room, to teach her to respect its splendour. Unmarried people, as a result of their isolation, and prompted by the craving for something to interest them, are led to supply the place of natural affections by artificial affections—the love of dogs, cats, or canary birds, of their servant or their spiritual director. Thus Rogron and Sylvie had an immoderate affection for the house and furniture that had cost them so much. Sylvie had taken to helping Adèle every morning, being of opinion that the woman did not know how to wipe furniture, to brush it, and make it look like new. This cleaning was soon her constant occupation. Thus, far from diminishing in value, the furniture was improved. Then the problem was to use it without wearing it out, without staining it, without scratching the wood or chilling the polish. This idea ere long became an old maid's monomania. Sylvie kept in a closet woollen rags, wax, varnish, and brushes; she learnt to use them as skilfully as a polisher; she had feather brooms and dusters, and she could rub without fear of hurting herself, she was so strong! Her clear, blue eye, as cold and hard as steel, constantly peered under the furniture, and you were more likely to find a tender chord in her heart than a speck of flue under a chair.

After what had passed at Madame Tiphaine's, Sylvie could not possibly shirk the outlay of three hundred francs. During the first week Sylvie was wholly occupied, and Pierrette constantly amused, by the frocks to be ordered and tried on, the shifts and petticoats to be cut out and made by needlewomen working by the day. Pierrette did not know how to sew.

'She has been nicely brought up!' cried Rogron. 'Do you know nothing, child?'

Pierrette, who only knew how to love, answered but by a pretty childish shrug.

'What did you do all day in Brittany?' asked Rogron.

'I played,' she replied guilelessly. 'Everybody played with me. Grandmamma and grandpapa—and everybody told me stories. Oh! they were very fond of me.'

'Indeed!' replied Rogron, 'and so you lived like a lady.'

Pierrette did not understand this tradesman's wit. She opened her eyes wide.

'She is as stupid as a wooden stool,' said Sylvie to Mademoiselle Borain, the best workwoman in Provins.

'So young!' said the needlewoman, looking at Pierrette, whose delicate little face looked up at her with a knowing expression.

Pierrette liked the workwomen better than her cousins; she put on pretty airs for them, watched them sewing, said quaint things—the flowers of childhood, such as Rogron and Sylvie had already silenced by fear, for they liked to impress all dependants with a wholesome alarm. The sewing-women were charmed with Pierrette. The outfit, however, was not achieved without some terrible interjections.

'That child will cost us the eyes in our heads!' said Sylvie to Rogron.

'Hold yourself up child, do. The deuce is in it! the clothes are for you, not for me,' said she to Pierrette, when she was being measured or fitted.

'Come, let Mademoiselle Borain do her work; you

won't pay her day's wages!' she exclaimed, seeing the child ask the head needlewoman to do something for her.

'Mademoiselle,' asked Mademoiselle Borain, 'must this seam be back-stitched?'

'Yes; make everything strongly; I do not want to have such a piece of work again in a hurry.'

But it was the same with the little cousin as with the house. Pierrette was to be as well dressed as Madame Garceland's little girl. She had fashionable little boots of bronze kid, like the little Tiphaine girl. She had very fine cotton stockings, stays by the best maker, a frock of blue reps, a pretty cape lined with white silk, all in rivalry with young Madame Julliard's little girl. And the underclothes were as good as the outside show, Sylvie was so much afraid of the keen and scrutinising eye of the mothers of children. Pierrette had pretty shifts of fine calico. Mademoiselle Borain said that Madame the Sous-préfète's little girls wore cambric drawers with embroidery and frilling—the latest thing, in short; Pierrette had frilled drawers. A charming drawn bonnet was ordered for her of blue velvet lined with white satin, like the little Martener girl's. Thus Pierrette was the smartest little person in Provins. On Sunday, on coming out from church, all the ladies kissed her. Mesdames Tiphaine, Garceland, Galardon, Auffray, Lesourd, Martener, Guépin, and Julliard doted on the sweet little Bretonne. This excitement flattered old Sylvie's vanity, and in her lavishness she thought less of Pierrette than of gratified pride.

However, Sylvie was fated to find offence in her little cousin's success, and this was how it came about: Pierrette was asked out, and, still to triumph over her neighbours, Sylvie allowed her to go. Pierrette was called for to play games and have dolls' dinner-parties with these ladies' children. Pierrette was a much greater success than the Rogrons; Mademoiselle Sylvie was aggrieved that Pierrette was in demand at other houses,

but that no one came to see Pierrette at home. The artless child made no secret of her enjoyment at the houses of the Tiphaines, the Marteners, the Galardons, the Julliards, the Lesourds, the Auffrays, and the Garcelands, whose kindness contrasted strangely with the vexatiousness of her cousins. A mother would have been glad of her child's happiness; but the Rogrons had taken Pierrette to please themselves, not to please her; their feelings, far from being paternal, were tainted with egoism and a sort of commercial interest.

The beautiful outfit, the fine Sunday clothes, and the everyday frocks began Pierrette's misfortunes. Like all children free to amuse themselves and accustomed to follow the dictates of fancy, she wore out her shoes, boots, and frocks with frightful rapidity, and, above all, her frilled drawers. A mother when she scolds her child thinks of the child only; she is only hard when driven to extremities, and when the child is in the wrong; but in this great clothes question, the cousins' money was the first consideration; that was the real point, and not Pierrette. Children have a dog-like instinct for discerning injustice in those who rule them; they feel without fail whether they are tolerated or loved. Innocent hearts are more alive to shades than to contrasts; a child that does not yet understand evil knows when you offend the sense of beauty bestowed on it by nature. The lessons that Pierrette brought upon herself as to the behaviour of a well-bred young lady, as to modesty and economy, were the corollary of this main idea—'Pierrette is ruining us.'

These scoldings, which had a fatal issue for Pierrette, led the old couple back into the familiar commercial ruts from which their home-life at Provins had led them to wander, and in which their nature could expand and blossom. After being used to domineer, to make remarks, to give orders, to scold their clerks sharply, Rogron and his sister were perishing for lack of victims.

Small natures require despotism to exercise their sinews, as great souls thirst for equality to give play to their heart. Now narrow minds can develop as well through persecution as through benevolence; they can assure themselves of their power by tyrannising cruelly or beneficently over others; they go the way their nature guides them. Add to this the guidance of interest, and you will have the key to most social riddles. Pierrette now became very necessary to her cousins' existence. Since her arrival the Rogrons had been absorbed in her outfit, and then attracted by the novelty of companionship. Every new thing, a feeling, or even a tyranny, must form its set, its creases. Sylvie began by calling Pierrette 'my child'; she gave up 'my child' for 'Pierrette' unqualified. Her reproofs, at first sourly gentle, became hard and sharp. As soon as they had started on this road, the brother and sister made rapid progress. They were no longer dull. It was not a deliberate scheme of malice and cruelty; it was the instinct of unreasoning tyranny. They believed that they were doing good to Pierrette, as of old to their apprentices.

Pierrette, whose sensitiveness was genuine, noble, and overstrung, the very antipodes of the Rogrons' aridity, had a horror of being blamed; it struck her so cruelly that tears rose at once to her large, clear eyes. She had a hard struggle to suppress her engaging liveliness, which charmed every one out of the house. She might indulge it before the mothers of her little friends; but at home, by the end of the first month, she began to sit silent, and Rogron asked her if she were ill. At this strange question she flew off to the bottom of the garden to cry by the river, into which her tears fell, as she was one day to fall in the torrent of society.

One day, in spite of her care, the little girl tore her best reps frock at Madame Tiphaine's, where she had gone to play one fine day. She at once burst into tears, foreseeing the scolding that awaited her at home. On

being questioned, she let fall a few words about her terrible cousin Sylvie in the midst of her tears. Pretty Madame Tiphaine had some stuff to match, and she herself put in a new front breadth. Mademoiselle Rogron heard of the trick, as she called it, played on her by that limb of a little girl. From that day she would never let Pierrette visit any of the ladies.

The new life which Pierrette was to lead at Provins was fated to fall into three very distinct phases. The first lasted three months, during which she enjoyed a kind of happiness, divided between the old people's cold caresses, and the scoldings, which she found scorching. The prohibition that kept her from seeing her little friends, emphasising the necessity for beginning to learn everything that a well-brought-up girl should know, put an end to the first phase of Pierrette's life at Provins, the only period when she found existence endurable.

The domestic changes produced at the Rogrons' house by Pierrette's residence there were studied by Vinet and the Colonel with the cunning of a fox bent on getting into a fowl-house, and uneasy at discovering a new creature on the scene. They both paid calls at long intervals, so as not to scare Mademoiselle Sylvie; they found various excuses for chatting with Rogron, and made themselves masters of the situation with an air of reserve and dignity that the great Tartufe might have admired. The Colonel and the lawyer spent at the Rogrons the evening of the very day when Sylvie had refused, in very harsh terms, to let Pierrette go to Madame Tiphaine's. On hearing of her refusal, the Colonel and the lawyer looked at each other as folks who knew their Provins.

'She positively tried to make a fool of you?' said the lawyer. 'We warned Rogron long ago of what has now happened. There is no good to be got out of those people.'

'What can you expect of the Anti-national Party?' cried the Colonel, curling up his moustache and interrupting Vinet. 'If we had tried to get you away from them, you might have thought that we had some malicious motive for speaking to you so. But why, Mademoiselle, if you are fond of a little game, should you not play boston in the evenings at home in your own house? Is it impossible to find any one in the place of such idiots as the Julliards? Vinet and I play boston; we will find a fourth. Vinet might introduce his wife to you; she is very nice, and she is one of the Chargebœufs. You will not be like those apes in the upper town; you will not expect a good little housewife, who is compelled by her family's disgraceful conduct to do all her own house-work, to dress like a duchess,—and she has the courage of a lion and the gentleness of a lamb.'

Sylvie Rogron displayed her long yellow teeth in a smile at the Colonel, who endured the horrible phenomenon very well, and even assumed a flattering air.

'If there are but four of us, we cannot play boston every evening,' replied she.

'Why, where else have I to go—an old soldier like me who has nothing to do, and lives on his pensions? The lawyer is free every evening. Besides, you will have company, I promise you,' he added, with a mysterious air.

'You have only to declare yourselves frankly opposed to the Ministerial party in Provins, and hold your own against them,' said Vinet. 'You would see how popular you would be in Provins; you would have a great many people on your side. You would make the Tiphaines furious by having an Opposition salon. Well, then, let us laugh at others, if others laugh at us. The "clique" do not spare you, I can tell you.'

'What do they say?' asked Sylvie.

In country towns there is always more than one safety-

valve by which gossip finds a vent from one set into another. Vinet had heard all that had been said about the Rogrons in the drawing-rooms from which the haberdashers had been definitively banished. The supernumerary judge Desfondrilles, the archæologist, was of neither party. This man, like some other independent members of society, repeated everything he heard, out of provincial habit, and Vinet had had the benefit of his chit-chat. The malicious lawyer repeated Madame Tiphaine's pleasantries with added venom. As he revealed the practical jokes of which Sylvie and Rogron had been the unconscious victims, he stirred the rage and aroused the revengeful spirit of these two arid souls, craving some aliment for their mean passions.

A few days later Vinet brought his wife, a well-bred woman, shy, neither plain nor pretty, very meek, and very conscious of her misfortune. Madame Vinet was fair, rather worn by the cares of her penurious housekeeping, and very simply dressed. No woman could have better pleased Sylvie. Madame Vinet put up with Sylvie's airs, and gave way to her like a woman accustomed to give way. On her round forehead, her rose-pink cheeks, in her slow, gentle eyes, there were traces of those deep reflections, that clear-sighted thoughtfulness, which women who are used to suffering bury under perfect silence. The influence of the Colonel, displaying for Sylvie's behoof *courtieresque* graces that seemed wrung from his soldierly roughness, with that of the wily Vinet, soon made itself felt by Pierrette. The child, the pretty squirrel, shut up in the house, or going out only with old Sylvie, was every instant checked by a 'Don't touch that, Pierrette!' and by incessant sermons on holding herself up. Pierrette stooped and held her shoulders high; her cousin wanted her to be as straight as herself, and she was like a soldier presenting arms to his Colonel; she would sometimes give her little slaps on her back to make her hold herself up. The free and

light-hearted child of the Marais learnt to measure her movements and imitate an automaton.

One evening, which marked the beginning of the second period, Pierrette, whom the three visitors had not seen in the drawing-room during the evening, came to kiss her cousins and curtsey to the company before going to bed. Sylvie coldly offered her cheek to the pretty little thing, as if to be kissed and have done with it. The action was so cruelly significant that tears started from Pierrette's eyes.

'Have you pricked yourself, my little Pierrette,' said the abominable Vinet.

'What is the matter with you?' asked Sylvie severely.

'Nothing,' said the poor child, going to kiss Rogron.

'Nothing?' repeated Sylvie. 'You cannot be crying for nothing!'

'What is it, my little pet?' said Madame Vinet.

'My rich cousin Sylvie does not treat me so well as my poor grandmother!'

'Your grandmother stole your money,' said Sylvie, 'and your cousin will leave you hers.'

The Colonel and Vinet exchanged covert glances.

'I would rather be robbed and loved,' said Pierrette.

'Very well, you shall be sent back to the place you came from.'

'But what has the dear child done?' asked Madame Vinet.

Vinet fixed his eye on his wife, with that terrible cold, fixed stare that belongs to those who rule despotically. The poor lonely woman, unceasingly punished for not having the one thing required of her—namely, a fortune—took up her cards again.

'What has she done?' cried Sylvie, raising her head with a jerk so sudden, that the yellow wallflowers in her cap were shaken. 'She does not know what to do next to annoy us. She opened my watch to examine the works, and touched the wheel, and broke the mainspring.

Madam listens to nothing. All day long I am telling her to take care what she is about, and I might as well talk to the lamp.'

Pierrette, ashamed of being reprimanded in the presence of strangers, went out of the room very gently.

'I cannot think how to quell that child's turbulence,' said Rogron.

'Why, she is old enough to go to school,' said Madame Vinet.

Another look from Vinet silenced his wife, to whom he had been careful not to confide his plans and the Colonel's with regard to the bachelor couple.

'That is what comes of taking charge of other people's children,' cried Gouraud. 'You might have some of your own yet, you or your brother; why do you not both marry?'

Sylvie looked very sweetly at the Colonel; for the first time in her life she beheld a man to whom the idea that she might marry did not seem absurd.

'Madame Vinet is right!' cried Rogron, 'that would keep Pierrette quiet. A master would not cost much.'

The Colonel's speech so entirely occupied Sylvie that she did not answer her brother.

'If only you would stand the money for the Opposition paper we were talking about, you might find a tutor for your little cousin in the responsible editor. We could get that poor schoolmaster who was victimised by the encroachments of the priests. My wife is right; Pierrette is a rough diamond that needs polishing,' said Vinet to Rogron.

'I fancied that you were a Baron,' said Sylvie to the Colonel, after a long pause, while each player seemed meditative.

'Yes. But having won the title in 1814, after the battle of Nangis, where my regiment did wonders, how could I find the money or the assistance needed to get it duly registered? The barony, like the rank of general,

which I won in 1815, must wait for a revolution to secure them to me.'

'If you could give a mortgage as your guarantee for the money,' said Rogron presently, 'I could do it.'

'That could be arranged with Cournant,' replied Vinet. 'The newspaper would lead to the Colonel's triumph, and make your drawing-room more powerful than those of Tiphaine and Co.'

'How is that?' asked Sylvie.

At this moment, while Madame Vinet was dealing, and the lawyer explaining all the importance that the publication of an independent paper for the district of Provins must confer on Rogron, the Colonel, and himself, Pierrette was bathed in tears. Her heart and brain were agreed; she thought Sylvie far more to blame than herself. The little Bretonne instinctively perceived how unfailing charity and benevolence should be. She hated her fine frocks and all that was done for her. She paid too dear for these benefits. She cried with rage at having given her cousins a hold over her, and determined to behave in such a way as to reduce them to silence, poor child! Then she saw how noble Brigaut had been to give her his savings. She thought her woes had reached a climax, not knowing that at that moment new misfortunes were being plotted in the drawing-room.

A few days later Pierrette had a writing-master. She was to learn to read, write, and do sums. Pierrette's education involved the house of Rogron in fearful disaster. There was ink on the tables, on the furniture, and on her clothes; writing-books and pens strewn everywhere, powder on the upholstery, books torn and dogs-eared while she was learning her lessons. They already spoke to her—and in what a way!—of the necessity for earning her living and being a burthen on no one. As she heard these dreadful warnings, Pierrette felt a burning in her throat; she was choking, her heart beat painfully fast. She was obliged to swallow down her tears; for

each one was reckoned with as an offence against her magnanimous relations. Rogron had found the occupation that suited him. He scolded Pierrette as he had formerly scolded his shopmen; he would fetch her in from the midst of her play to compel her to study; he heard her repeat her lessons; he was the poor child's fierce tutor. Sylvie, on her part, thought it her duty to teach Pierrette the little she knew of womanly accomplishments.

Neither Rogron nor his sister had any gentleness of nature. These narrow souls, finding a real pleasure in bullying the poor little thing, changed unconsciously from mildness to the greatest severity. This severity was, they said, the consequence of the child's obstinacy; she had begun too late to learn, and was dull of apprehension. Her teachers did not understand the art of giving lessons in a form suited to the pupil's intelligence, which is what should distinguish private from public education. The fault lay far less with Pierrette than with her cousins. It took her an immensely long time to learn the beginnings. For the merest trifle she was called stupid and silly, foolish and awkward. Incessantly ill used by hard words, Pierrette never met any but cold looks from the two old people. She fell into the stolid dulness of a sheep; she dared do nothing when she found her actions misjudged, misunderstood, misinterpreted. In everything she awaited Sylvie's orders, and the expression of her cousin's will, keeping her thoughts to herself and shutting herself up in passive obedience. Her bright colour began to fade. Sometimes she complained of aches and pains. When Sylvie asked her, Where? the poor child, who felt generally ailing, replied, 'All over.'

'Was ever such a thing heard of as aching all over? If you were ill all over, you would be dead!' retorted Sylvie.

'You may have a pain in your chest,' said Rogron the expositor, 'or in your teeth, or your head, or your feet,

or your stomach, but no one ever had pains everywhere. What do you mean by 'all over'? Pain all over is pain nowhere. Do you know what you are doing? You are talking for talking's sake.'

Pierrette at last never spoke, finding that her artless girlish remarks, the flowers of her opening mind, were met with commonplace retorts which her good sense told her were ridiculous.

'You are always complaining, and you eat like a fasting friar!' said Rogron.

The only person who never distressed this sweet fragile flower was the sturdy servant Adèle. Adèle always warmed the little girl's bed, but in secret, since one evening when, being discovered in the act of thus 'spoiling' her master's heiress, she was scolded by Sylvie.

'Children must be hardened; that is the way to give them strong constitutions. Have we been any the worse for it, my brother and I?' said Sylvie. 'You will make Pierrette a peeky coddle!'—*une picheline*, a word of the Rogron vocabulary to designate weakly and complaining persons.

The little angel's caressing expressions were regarded as mere acting. The roses of affection that budded so fresh and lovely in this young soul, and longed to open to the day, were mercilessly crushed. Pierrette felt the hardest blows on the tenderest spots of her heart. If she tried to soften these two savage natures by her pretty ways, she was accused of expressing her tenderness out of self-interest. 'Tell me plainly what you want,' Rogron would exclaim roughly; 'you are certainly not coaxing me for nothing.'

Neither the sister nor the brother recognised affection, and Pierrette was all affection.

Colonel Gouraud, anxious to please Mademoiselle Rogron, declared her right in all that concerned Pierrette. Vinet no less supported the old cousins in their abuse of Pierrette; he ascribed all the reported misdeeds of

this angel to the obstinacy of the Breton character, and said that no power, no strength of will, could ever conquer it. Rogron and his sister were flattered with the utmost skill by these two courtiers, who had at last succeeded in extracting from Rogron the surety money for the newspaper, the *Provins Courrier*, and from Sylvie five thousand francs, as a shareholder. The Colonel and Vinet now took the field. They disposed of a hundred shares at five hundred francs each to the electors who held State securities, and whom the Liberal journals filled with alarms, to farmers, and to persons who were called independent. They even extended their ramifications over the whole department, and beyond it, to some adjacent townships. Each shareholder subscribed for the paper, of course. Then the legal and other advertisements were divided between the *Ruche* and the *Courrier*. The first number contained a grandiloquent column in praise of Rogron, who was represented as the Laffitte of Provins.

As soon as the public mind found a leader, it became easy to perceive that the coming elections would be hotly contested. Madame Tiphaine was in despair.

'Unfortunately,' said she, as she read an article attacking her and Monsieur Julliard, 'unfortunately, I forgot that there is always a rogue not far away from a dupe, and that folly always attracts a clever man of the fox species.'

As soon as the newspaper was to be seen for twenty leagues round, Vinet had a new coat and boots, and a decent waistcoat and trousers. He displayed the famous white hat affected by Liberals, and showed his collar and cuffs. His wife engaged a servant, and appeared dressed as became the wife of an influential man; she wore pretty caps.

Vinet, out of self-interest, was grateful. He and his friend Cournant, notary to the Liberal side, and Auffray's opponent, became the Rogrons' advisers, and did them

two great services. The leases granted by old Rogron their father, in 1815, under unfortunate circumstances, were about to fall in. Horticulture and market-gardening had lately developed enormously in the Provins district. The pleader and the notary made it their business to effect an increase of fourteen hundred francs a year on granting the new leases. Vinet also won for them two lawsuits against two villages, relating to plantations of trees, in which the loss of five hundred poplars was involved. The money for the poplars, with the Rogrons' savings, which for the last three years had amounted to six thousand francs deposited at compound interest, was skilfully laid out in the purchase of several plots of land. Finally, Vinet proposed and carried out the eviction of certain peasant proprietors, to whom Rogron the elder had lent money, and who had killed themselves with cultivating and manuring their land to enable them to repay it, but in vain.

Thus the damage done to the Rogrons' capital by the reconstruction of their house was to a great extent remedied. Their estates in the immediate neighbourhood of the town, chosen by their father as innkeepers know how to choose, cut up into small holdings of which the largest was less than five acres, and let to perfectly solvent tenants, themselves owners of some plots of land mortgaged to secure the farm rents, brought in at Martinmas, in November 1826, five thousand francs. The taxes were paid by the tenants, and there were no buildings to repair or insure against fire.

The brother and sister each possessed four thousand six hundred francs in the five per cents.; and as their selling value was above par, Vinet exhorted them to invest the money in land, promising them—seconded by the notary—that they should not lose a farthing of interest by the transfer.

By the end of this second period life was so intolerable

to Pierrette—the indifference of all about her, the senseless fault-finding and lack of affection in her cousins became so virulent, she felt so plainly the cold chill of the tomb blowing upon her, that she entertained the daring project of going away, on foot, with no money, to Brittany to rejoin her grandfather and grandmother. Two events prevented this: Old Lorrain died, and Rogron was appointed Pierrette's guardian by a family council held at Provins. If her old grandmother had died first, it is probable that Rogron, advised by Vinet, would have called upon the grandfather to repay the child's eight thousand francs, and have reduced him to beggary.

'Why, you may inherit Pierrette's money,' said Vinet with a hideous smile. 'You never can tell who will live or who will die.'

Enlightened by this speech, Rogron left the widow Lorrain no peace as Pierrette's debtor till he had made her secure to the little girl the capital of the eight thousand francs by a deed of gift, of which he paid the cost.

Pierrette was strangely affected by this loss. Just as the blow fell on her she was to be prepared for her first Communion, the other event which by its obligations tied her to Provins. This necessary and simple ceremony was to bring about great changes for the Rogrons. Sylvie learnt that the curé, Monsieur Péroux, was instructing the little Julliards, the Lesourds, Garcelands, and others. She made it therefore a point of honour to put Pierrette under the guidance of the Abbé Péroux's superior, Monsieur Habert, a man who was said to belong to the Jesuit Congregation—very zealous for the interests of the Church, much dreaded in Provins, and hiding immense ambition under the strictest severity of principle. This priest's sister, an unmarried woman of about thirty, had a school for girls in the town. The brother and sister were much alike; both lean, sallow, atrabilious, with black hair.

Pierrette, a Bretonne nurtured in the practice and poetry of the Catholic faith, opened her heart and ears to the teaching of this imposing priest. Suffering predisposes the mind to devoutness; and most young girls, prompted by instinctive tenderness, lean towards mysticism, the obscurer side of religion. So the priest sowed the seed of the Gospel and the dogmas of the Church in good ground. He completely changed Pierrette's frame of mind. Pierrette loved Jesus Christ as presented to girls in the Sacrament, as a celestial bridegroom; her moral and physical sufferings now had their meaning; she was taught to see the hand of God in everything. Her soul, so cruelly stricken in this house, while she could not accuse her cousins, took refuge in the sphere whither fly all who are wretched, borne on the wings of the three Christian virtues. She gave up the idea of flight. Sylvie, amazed at the alteration produced in Pierrette by Monsieur Habert, became curious. And so, while preparing the child for her first Communion, Monsieur Habert won to God the hitherto wandering soul of Mademoiselle Sylvie. Sylvie became a bigot.

Denis Rogron, over whom the supposed Jesuit could get no hold—for at that time the spirit of his late lamented Majesty Constitution the First was in some simpletons supreme above that of the Church—Denis remained faithful to Colonel Gouraud, Vinet, and Liberalism.

Mademoiselle Rogron, of course, made acquaintance with Mademoiselle Habert, with whom she was in perfect sympathy. The two old maids loved each other like two loving sisters. Mademoiselle Habert proposed to take Pierrette under her care, and spare Sylvie the trouble and vexations of educating a child; but the brother and sister replied that Pierrette's absence would make the house feel too empty. The Rogrons' attachment to their little cousin seemed excessive.

On seeing Mademoiselle Habert in possession, Colonel

Gouraud and Vinet ascribed to the ambitious priest, on his sister's behalf, the matrimonial scheme imagined by the Colonel.

'Your sister wants to see you married,' said the lawyer to the ex-haberdasher.

'And to whom?' said Rogron.

'To that old sibyl of a schoolmistress,' cried the Colonel, curling his moustache.

'She has said nothing to me about it,' said Rogron blankly.

A woman so determined as Sylvie was sure to make great progress in the ways of salvation. The priest's influence soon grew in the house, supported as it was by Sylvie, who managed her brother. The two Liberals, very legitimately alarmed, understood that if the priest had determined to get Rogron for his sister's husband—a far more suitable match than that of Sylvie and the Colonel—he would urge Sylvie to the excessive practice of religion, and make Pierrette go into a convent. They would thus lose the reward of eighteen months of efforts, meanness, and flattery. They took a terrible dumb hatred of the priest and his sister, and yet, if they were to keep up with them step for step, they felt the necessity of remaining on good terms with them.

Monsieur and Mademoiselle Habert, who played both whist and boston, came every evening. Their assiduity excited that of the others. The lawyer and the soldier felt that they were pitted against adversaries stronger than themselves, a preconception which Monsieur Habert and his sister fully shared. This situation was in itself a battle. Just as the Colonel gave to Sylvie a foretaste of the unhoped-for joys of an offer of marriage—for she had brought herself to regard Gouraud as a man worthy of her—so Mademoiselle Habert wrapped the retired haberdasher in the cotton wool of her attentions, her speeches, and her looks. Neither party could say to itself the great word of great politicians, 'Divide the spoil!' each insisted on the whole prize.

Besides, the two wily foxes of the Opposition at Provins—an Opposition that was growing in strength—were rash enough to believe themselves stronger than the Priesthood; they were the first to fire. Vinet, whose gratitude was stirred up by the claw-fingers of self-interest, went to fetch Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf and her mother. The two women, who had about two thousand francs a year, lived very narrowly at Troyes. Mademoiselle Bathilde de Chargebœuf was one of those splendid women who believe in marrying for love, and change their minds towards their five-and-twentieth year on finding themselves still unwedded. Vinet succeeded in persuading Madame de Chargebœuf to combine her two thousand francs with the thousand crowns he was making now that the newspaper was started, and to come and live with him at Provins, where Bathilde, he said, might marry a simpleton named Rogron, and, so clever as she was, rival handsome Madame Tiphaine.

The reinforcement of Vinet's household and ideas by the arrival of Madame and Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf gave the utmost cohesion to the Liberal party. This coalition brought consternation to the aristocracy of Provins and the Tiphaine party. Madame de Bréautey, in dismay at seeing two women of family so misled, begged them to come to see her. She bewailed the blunders committed by the Royalists, and was furious with those of Troyes on learning the poverty of this mother and daughter.

'What! was there no old country gentleman who would marry that dear girl, born to rule a château?' cried she. 'They have let her run to seed, and now she will throw herself at the head of a Rogron!'

She hunted the department through, and failed to find one gentleman who would marry a girl whose mother had but two thousand francs a year. Then the 'clique' of the Tiphaines and the Sous-préfet also set to work, but too late, to discover such a man. Madame de

Bréautey inveighed loudly against the selfishness that was eating up France, the result of materialism and of the power conferred on money by the laws; the nobility was nothing in these days! Beauty was nothing! Rogrons and Vinets were defying the King of France!

Bathilde had the indisputable advantage over her rival not merely of beauty, but of dress. She was dazzlingly fair. At five-and-twenty her fully-developed shoulders and splendid modelling were exquisitely full. The roundness of her throat, the slenderness of her articulations, the splendour of her fine fair hair, the charm of her smile, the elegant shape of her head, the dignity and outline of her face, her fine eyes under a well-moulded brow, her calm and well-bred movements, and her still girlish figure, all were in harmony. She had a fine hand and a narrow foot. Her robust health gave her, perhaps, the look of a handsome inn-servant; 'but that should be no fault in a Rogron's eyes,' said pretty Madame Tiphaine.

The first time Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf was seen she was dressed simply enough. Her dress of brown merino, edged with green embroidery, was cut low; but a kerchief of tulle, neatly drawn down by invisible strings, covered her shoulders, back, and bust, a little open at the throat, though fastened by a brooch and chain. Under this fine network Bathilde's beauty was even more attractive, more suggestive. She took off her velvet bonnet and her shawl on entering, and showed pretty ears with gold eardrops. She had a little cross and heart on black velvet round her neck, which contrasted with its whiteness like the black that fantastic nature sets round the tail of a white Angora cat. She was expert in all the arts of girls on their promotion: twisting her fingers to arrange curls that are not out of place, displaying her wrists by begging Rogron to button her cuff, which the hapless man, quite dazzled, bluntly refused to do, hiding his agitation under assumed in-

difference. The bashfulness of the only passion our haberdasher was ever to know in his life always gave it the demeanour of hatred. Sylvie, as well as Céleste Habert, misunderstood it; not so the lawyer, the superior man of this company of simpletons, whose only enemy was the priest, for the Colonel had long been his ally.

Gouraud, on his part, thenceforth behaved to Sylvie as Bathilde did to Rogron. He appeared in clean linen every evening; he wore velvet collars, which gave effect to his martial countenance, set off by the corners of his white shirt collar; he adopted white drill waistcoats, and had a new frockcoat made of blue cloth, on which his red rosette was conspicuous, and all under pretence of doing honour to the fair Bathilde. He never smoked after two o'clock. His grizzled hair was brushed down in a wave over his ochre-coloured skull. In short, he assumed the appearance and attitude of a party chief, of a man who was prepared to rout the enemies of France —in one word, the Bourbons—with tuck of drum.

The Satanical pleader and the cunning Colonel played a still more cruel trick on Monsieur and Mademoiselle Habert than that of introducing the beautiful Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf, who was pronounced by the Liberal party and by the Bréauteys to be ten times handsomer than the beautiful Madame Tiphaine. These two great country-town politicians had it rumoured from one to another that Monsieur Habert agreed with them on all points. Provins before long spoke of him as a 'Liberal priest.' Called up before the Bishop, Monsieur Habert was obliged to give up his evenings with the Rogrons, but his sister still went there. Thenceforth the Rogron drawing-room was a fact and a power.

And so, by the middle of that year, political intrigues were not less eager than matrimonial intrigues in the Rogrons' rooms. While covert interests, buried out of sight, were fighting wildly for the upper hand, the public struggle won disastrous notoriety. Everybody

knows that the Villèle ministry was overthrown by the elections of 1826. In the Provins constituency, Vinet, the Liberal candidate—for whom Monsieur Cournant had obtained his qualification by the purchase of some land of which the price remained unpaid—came very near beating Monsieur Tiphaine. The President had a majority of only two.

Mesdames Vinet and de Chargebœuf, Vinet and the Colonel, were sometimes joined by Monsieur Cournant and his wife; then by Néraud the doctor, a man whose youth had been very 'stormy,' but who now took serious views of life; he had devoted himself to science, it was said, and if the Liberals were to be believed, was a far cleverer man than Monsieur Martener. To the Rogrons their triumph was as inexplicable as their ostracism had been.

The handsome Bathilde de Chargebœuf, to whom Vinet spoke of Pierrette as an enemy, was horribly disdainful to the child. The humiliation of this poor victim was necessary to the interest of all. Madame Vinet could do nothing for the little girl who was being brayed in the mortar of the pitiless egotisms which the lady at last understood. But for her husband's imperative desire she would never have come to the Rogrons; it grieved her too much to see their ill-usage of the pretty little thing who clung to her, understanding her secret goodwill, and begged her to teach her such or such a stitch or embroidery pattern. Pierrette had shown that when she was thus treated she understood and succeeded to admiration. But Madame Vinet was no longer of any use, so she came no more.

Sylvie, who still cherished the notion of marriage, now regarded Pierrette as an obstacle. Pierrette was nearly fourteen; her sickly fairness, a symptom that was quite overlooked by the ignorant old maid, made her lovely. Then Sylvie had the bright idea of indemnifying herself for the expenses caused by Pierrette by making

a servant of her. Vinet, as representing the interests of the Chargebœufs, Mademoiselle Habert, Gouraud, all the influential visitors, advised Sylvie by all means to dismiss Adèle. Could not Pierrette cook and keep the house in order? When there was too much to be done, she need only engage the Colonel's housekeeper, a very accomplished person, and one of the best cooks in Provins. Pierrette ought to learn to cook and to polish the floors, said the baleful lawyer, to sweep, keep the house neat, go to market, and know the price of things. The poor little girl, whose unselfishness was as great as her generosity, offered it herself, glad to pay thus for the hard bread she ate under that roof.

Adèle went. Thus Pierrette lost the only person who might perhaps have protected her. Strong as she was, from that hour she was crushed body and soul. The old people had less mercy on her than on a servant: she was their property! She was scolded for mere nothings, for a little dust left on the corner of a chimney-shelf or a glass shade. These objects of luxury that she had so much admired became odious to her. In spite of her anxiety to do right, her relentless cousin Sylvie always found some fault with everything she did. In two years Pierrette never heard a word of praise or of affection. Her whole happiness consisted in not being scolded. She submitted with angelic patience to the dark moods of these two unmarried beings, to whom the gentler feelings were all unknown, and who made her suffer every day from her dependency. This life in which the young girl was gripped, as it were, between the two haberdashers as in the jaws of a vice, increased her malady. She had such violent fits of inexplicable distress, such sudden bursts of secret grief, that her physical development was irremediably checked. And thus, by slow degrees, through terrible though concealed sufferings, Pierrette had come to the state in which the friend of her childhood had seen her as he stood on the little Square and greeted her with his Breton ballad.

Before entering on the story of the domestic drama in the Rogrons' house, to which Brigaut's arrival gave rise, it will be necessary, to avoid digressions, to account for the lad's settling at Provins, since he is in some sort a silent personage on the stage.

Brigaut, as he fled, was alarmed not merely by Pierrette's signal, but also by the change in his little friend; hardly could he recognise her, but for the voice, eyes, and movements which recalled his lively little playfellow, at once so gay and so loving. When he had got far away from the house, his legs quaked under him, his spine felt on fire! He had seen the shadow of Pierrette, and not Pierrette herself. He made his way up to the old town thoughtful and uneasy, till he found a spot whence he could see the Place and the house where Pierrette lived; he gazed at it sadly, lost in thought as infinite as the troubles into which we plunge without knowing where they may end. Pierrette was ill; she was unhappy; she regretted Brittany! What ailed her? All these questions passed again and again through Brigaut's mind, and racked his breast, revealing to him the extent of his affection for his little adopted sister.

It is very rarely that a passion between two children of different sexes remains permanent. The charming romance of Paul and Virginia no more solves the problem of this strange moral fact than does that of Brigaut and Pierrette. Modern history offers the single illustrious exception of the sublime Marchesa di Pescara and her husband, who, destined for each other by their parents at the age of fourteen, adored each other, and were married. Their union gave to the sixteenth century the spectacle of boundless conjugal affection, never clouded. The Marchesa, a widow at four-and-thirty, beautiful, witty, universally beloved, refused monarchs, and buried herself in a convent, where she never saw, never heard, any one but nuns.

Such perfect love as this blossomed suddenly in the

heart of the poor Breton artisan. Pierrette and he had so often been each other's protectors, he had been so happy in giving her the money for her journey, he had almost died of running after the diligence, and Pierrette had not known it! The memory of it had often warmed him during the chill hours of his toilsome life these three years past. He had improved himself for Pierrette; he had learnt his craft for Pierrette; he had come to Paris for Pierrette, intending to make a fortune for her. After being there a fortnight, he could no longer control his longing to see her; he had walked from Saturday evening till Monday morning. He had intended to return to Paris, but the pathetic appearance of his little friend held him fast to Provins. A wonderful magnetism—still disputed, it is true, in spite of so many instances—acted on him without his knowing it; and tears filled his eyes, while they also dimmed Pierrette's sight. If to her he was Brittany and all her happy childhood, to him Pierrette was life! At sixteen Brigaut had not yet learnt to draw or give the section of a moulding; there were many things he did not know; but at piecework he had earned from four to five francs a day. So he could live at Provins; he would be within reach of Pierrette; he would finish learning his business by working under the best cabinetmaker in the town, and watch over the little girl.

Brigaut made up his mind at once. He flew back to Paris, settled his accounts, collected his pass, his luggage, and his tools. Three days later he was working for Monsieur Frappier, the best carpenter in Provins. Energetic workmen, steady, and averse to turbulency and taverns, are rare enough to make a master glad to get a young fellow like Brigaut. To conclude his story on that score, by the end of a fortnight he was foreman, lodging and boarding with Frappier, who taught him arithmetic and linear drawing. The carpenter lived in the High Street, about a hundred yards from the little

oblong Place, at the end of which stood the Rogrons' house.

Brigaut buried his love in his heart, and was not guilty of the smallest indiscretion. He got Madame Frappier to tell him the history of the Rogrons; from her he learnt how the old innkeeper had set to work to get the money left by old Auffray. Brigaut was fully informed as to the character of the haberdasher and his sister. One morning he met Pierrette at market with Mademoiselle Sylvie, and shuddered to see her with a basket on her arm full of provisions. He went to see Pierrette again at church on Sunday, where the girl appeared in all her best; there, for the first time, Brigaut understood that Pierrette was Mademoiselle Lorrain.

Pierrette saw her friend, but she made him a mysterious signal to keep himself out of sight. There was a world of meaning in this gesture, as in that by which, a fortnight since, she had bidden him vanish. What a fortune he would have to make in ten years to enable him to marry the companion of his childhood, to whom the Rogrons would leave a house, a hundred acres of land, and twelve thousand francs a year, not to mention their savings! The persevering Breton would not tempt fortune till he had acquired the knowledge he still lacked. So long as it was theory alone, it was all the same whether he learnt in Paris or at Provins, and he preferred to remain near Pierrette, to whom he also proposed to explain his plans and the sort of help she might count on. Finally, he would certainly not leave her till he understood the secret of the pallor which had already dimmed the life of the feature which generally retains it longest—the eyes; till he knew what caused the sufferings that gave her the look of a girl bowing before the scythe of Death, and about to be cut down.

Her two pathetic signals, which were not false to their friendship, but which enjoined the greatest caution, struck

terror into the lad's heart. Evidently Pierrette desired him to wait, and not to try to see her, or there would be danger and peril for her. As she came out of church she gave him a look, and Brigaut saw that her eyes were full of tears. The Breton would more easily have squared the circle than have guessed what had happened in the Rogrons' house since his arrival.

It was not without lively apprehensions that Pierrette came down from her room that day when Brigaut had plunged into her morning dream like another dream. Having risen and opened her window, Mademoiselle Rogron must have heard the song and its words—compromising, no doubt, in the ears of an old maid; but Pierrette knew nothing of the causes that made her cousin so alert. Sylvie had good reasons for getting up and running to the window. For about a week past strange secret events and cruel pangs of feeling had agitated the principal figures in the Rogron *salon*. These unknown events, carefully concealed by all concerned, were to fall on Pierrette like an icy avalanche.

The realm of mysteries, which ought perhaps to be called the foul places of the human heart, lies at the bottom of the greatest revolutions, political, social, or domestic; but in speaking of them it may be extremely useful to explain that their algebraical expression, though accurate, is not faithful so far as form is concerned. These deep calculations do not express themselves so brutally as history reports them. Any attempt to relate the circumlocutions, the rhetorical involutions, the long colloquies, in which the mind designedly darkens the light it casts, the honeyed words diluting the venom of certain insinuations, would mean writing a book as long as the noble poem called *Clarissa Harlowe*.

Mademoiselle Habert and Mademoiselle Rogron were equally desirous of marrying; but one was ten years younger than the other, and probability allowed Céleste

Habert to think that her children would inherit the Rogrons' whole fortune. Sylvie was almost forty-two, an age at which marriage has its risks. In confiding their ideas to each other to secure mutual approbation, Céleste Habert, on a hint from the vindictive Abbé, had enlightened Sylvie as to the possibilities of the position. The Colonel, a violent man, with the health of a soldier, a burly bachelor of forty-five, would no doubt act on the moral of all fairy tales: they lived happy, and had many children. This form of happiness alarmed Sylvie; she was afraid of dying—a fear which tortures unmarried women to the utmost.

But the Martignac ministry was now established—the second victory which upset the Villèle administration. Vinet's party held their head high in Provins. Vinet, now the leading advocate of la Brie, carried all before him, to use a colloquialism. Vinet was a personage; the Liberals prophesied his advancement; he would certainly be a deputy or public prosecutor. As to the Colonel, he would be Mayor of Provins. Oh! to reign as Madame Garceland reigned, to be the Mayoress! Sylvie could not resist this hope; she determined to consult a doctor, though it might cover her with ridicule. The two women, one triumphant, and the other sure of having her in leading-strings, invented one of those stratagems which women advised by a priest are so clever in planning. To consult Monsieur Néraud, the Liberal physician, Monsieur Martener's rival, would be a blunder. Céleste Habert proposed to Sylvie to hide her in a dressing-closet while she, Mademoiselle Habert, consulted Monsieur Martener, who attended the school, on her own account. Whether he were Céleste's accomplice or no, Martener told his client that there was some, though very little, danger for a woman of thirty. 'But with your constitution,' he added, 'you have nothing to fear.'

'And if a woman is past forty?' asked Mademoiselle Céleste Habert.

'A woman of forty who has been married and had children need fear nothing.'

'But an unmarried woman, perfectly well conducted —for example, Mademoiselle Rogron?'

'Well conducted! There can be no doubt,' said Monsieur Martener. 'In such a case the safe birth of a child is a miracle which God certainly works sometimes, but rarely.'

'And why?' asked Céleste Habert.

Whereupon the doctor replied in a terrific pathological description, explaining that the elasticity bestowed by Nature on the muscles and joints in youth ceased to exist at a certain age, particularly in women whose occupations had made them sedentary for some years, like Mademoiselle Rogron.

'And so, after forty no respectable woman ought to marry?'

'Or she should wait,' replied the doctor. 'But then it is hardly a marriage; it is a partnership. What else could it be?'

In short, it was proved by this consultation, clearly, scientifically, seriously, and rationally, that after the age of forty a virtuous maiden should not rush into matrimony.

When Monsieur Martener had left, Mademoiselle Céleste Habert found Mademoiselle Rogron green and yellow, her eyes dilated,—in fact, in a frightful state.

'Then you truly love the Colonel?' said she.

'I still hoped,' said the old maid.

'Well, then, wait,' said Mademoiselle Habert, who knew that time would be avenged on the Colonel.

The morality of this marriage was also doubtful. Sylvie went to sound her conscience in the confessional. The stern director expounded the views of the Church, which regards marriage only as a means of propagating the race, reprobates second marriages, and scorns passions that have no social aim. Sylvie Rogron's perplexity was

great. These mental struggles gave strange force to her passion, and lent it the unaccountable charm which forbidden joys have always had for women since the time of Eve.

Mademoiselle Rogron's disturbed state could not escape the lawyer's keen eye. One evening, after cards, Vinet went up to his dear friend Sylvie, took her hand, and led her to sit down with him on one of the sofas.

'Something ails you,' he said in her ear.

She gloomily bent her head. The pleader let Rogron leave the room, sat alone with the old maid, and got her to make a clean breast of it.

'Well played, Abbé! But you have played my game for me,' he said to himself after hearing of all the private consultations Sylvie had held, of which the last was the most alarming.

This sly legal fox was even more terrible in his explanations than the doctor had been; he advised the marriage, but only ten years hence for greater safety. The lawyer vowed that all the Rogron fortune should be Bathilde's. He rubbed his hands, and his very face grew sharper as he ran after Madame and Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf, whom he had left to start homewards with their servant armed with a lantern.

The influence exerted by Monsieur Habert, the physician of the soul, was entirely counteracted by Vinet, the physician of the purse. Rogron was by no means devout, so the man of the Church and the man of the Law, the two black gowns, pulled him opposite ways. When he heard of the victory carried off by Mademoiselle Habert, who hoped to marry Rogron, over Sylvie, hanging between the fear of death and the joy of becoming a baroness, Vinet perceived the possibility of removing the Colonel from the scene of battle. He knew Rogron well enough to find some means of making him marry the fair Bathilde. Rogron had not been able to resist the blandishments of Mademoiselle de

Chargebœuf; Vinet knew that the first time Rogron should be alone with Bathilde and himself their engagement would be settled. Rogron had come to the point of staring at Mademoiselle Habert, so shy was he of looking at Bathilde.

Vinet had just seen how much Sylvie was in love with the Colonel. He understood the depth of such a passion in an old maid, no less eaten up by bigotry, and he soon hit on a plan for ruining at one blow both Pierrette and the Colonel, getting rid of one by means of the other.

Next morning, on coming out of Court, he met the Colonel and Rogron walking together, their daily habit.

When these three men were seen together, their conjunction always made the town talk. This triumvirate, held in horror by the Sous-préfet, the Bench, and the Tiphaine partisans, made a triad of which the Liberals of Provins were proud. Vinet edited the *Courrier* single-handed; he was the head of the party; the Colonel, the responsible manager of the paper, was its arm; Rogron, with his money, formed the sinews; he was considered as the link between the managing committee at Provins and the managing committee in Paris. To hear the Tiphaines, these three men were always plotting something against the Government, while the Liberals admired them as defenders of the people. When the lawyer saw Rogron returning to the Square, brought homewards by the dinner-hour, he took the Colonel's arm and hindered him from accompanying the ex-haberdasher.

'Look here, Colonel,' said he, 'I am going to take a great weight off your shoulders. You can do better than marry Sylvie; if you go to work the right way, in two years' time you may marry little Pierrette Lorrain.'

And he told him the results of the Jesuit's manœuvring.

'What a clever stroke—and reaching so far!' said the Colonel.

'Colonel,' said Vinet gravely, 'Pierrette is a charming creature; you may be happy for the rest of your days. You have such splendid health, that such a match would not, for you, have the usual drawbacks of an ill-assorted marriage; still, do not imagine that this exchange of a terrible life for a pleasant one will be easy to effect. To convert your lady-love into your confidante is a manœuvre as dangerous as, in your profession, it is to cross a river under the enemy's fire. Keen as you are as a cavalry officer, you must study the position, and carry out your tactics with the superior skill which has won us our present position. If I should one day be public prosecutor, you may command the department. Ah! if only you had a vote, we should be further on our way. I might have bought the votes of those two officials by indemnifying them for the loss of their places, and we should have had a majority. I should be sitting by Dupin, Casimir Périer, and——'

The Colonel had for some time past been thinking of Pierrette, but he hid the thought with deep dissimulation; his roughness to Pierrette was only on the surface. The child could not imagine why the man who called himself her father's old comrade treated her so ill, when, if he met her alone, he put his hand under her chin and gave her a fatherly caress. Ever since Vinet had confided to him Mademoiselle Sylvie's terror of marriage, Gouraud had sought opportunities of seeing Pierrette alone, and then the rough officer was as mild as a cat; he would tell her how brave her father was, and say what a misfortune for her his death had been.

A few days before Brigaut's arrival, Sylvie had found Gouraud and Pierrette together. Jealousy had then entered into her soul with monastic vehemence. Jealousy, which is above all passions credulous and suspicious, is also that in which fancy has most power; but it does not lend wit, it takes it away; and in Sylvie jealousy gave birth to very strange ideas. She conceived that

the man who had sung the words 'Mistress Bride' to Pierrette must be the Colonel; and Sylvie thought she had reason to ascribe this serenade to the Colonel, because during the last week Gouraud's manner seemed to have undergone a change. This soldier was the only man who, in the solitude in which she had lived, had ever troubled himself about her; hence she watched him with all her eyes, all her understanding; and by dint of indulging in hopes alternately flourishing and blighted, she had given them so much scope that they produced the effect on her of a moral mirage. To use a fine but vulgar expression, by dint of looking she often saw nothing. By turns she rejected and struggled victoriously against the notion of this chimerical rivalry. She instituted comparisons between herself and Pierrette; she was forty, and her hair was grey; Pierrette was a deliciously white little girl, with eyes tender enough to bring warmth to a dead heart. She had heard it said that men of fifty were fond of little girls like Pierrette.

Before the Colonel had sown his wild oats and frequented the Rogrons' drawing-room, Sylvie had heard at the Tiphaines' parties strange reports of Gouraud and his doings. Old maids in love have the exaggerated Platonic notions which girls of twenty are apt to profess; they have never lost the hard-and-fast ideas which cling to all who have no experience of life, nor learnt how social forces modify, erode, and coerce such fine and lofty notions. To Sylvie the idea of being deceived by her Colonel was a thought that hammered at her brain.

So from the hour, that morning, which every celibate spends in bed between waking and rising, the old maid had thought of nothing but herself and Pierrette, and the song which had aroused her by the words, 'Mistress Bride.' Like a simpleton, instead of peeping at the lover through the Venetian shutters, she had opened her window, without reflecting that Pierrette would hear her. If she had but had the common wit of a spy, she

would have seen Brigaut, and the fateful drama then begun would not have taken place.

Pierrette, weak as she was, removed the wooden bars which fastened the kitchen shutters, opened the shutters, and hooked them back, then she opened the passage door leading into the garden. She took the various brooms needed for sweeping the carpet, the dining-room floor, the passage, the stairs, in short, for cleaning everything with such care and exactitude as no servant, not even a Dutch one, would give to her work; she hated the least reproof. To her, happiness consisted in seeing Sylvie's little blue eyes, colourless and cold, with a look—not indeed of satisfaction, that they never wore—only calm when she had examined everything with the owner's eye, the inscrutable glance which sees what escapes the keenest observer.

By the time Pierrette returned to the kitchen her skin was moist; then she put everything in order, lighted the stove so as to have live charcoal, made the fire in her cousins' rooms, and put hot water for their toilet, though she had none for hers. She laid the table for breakfast and lighted the dining-room stove. For all these various tasks she had to go to the cellar to fetch brushwood, leaving a cool place to go to a hot one, or a hot place to go into the cold and damp. These sudden changes, made with the reckless haste of youth, merely to avoid a hard word, or to obey some order, aggravated the state of her health beyond remedy. Pierrette did not know that she was ill. Still she felt the beginnings of sufferings; she had strange longings, and hid them; a passion for raw salad, which she devoured in secret. The innocent child had no idea that this state meant serious disease, and needed the greatest care. Before Brigaut's arrival, if Néraud, who might accuse himself of her grandmother's death, had revealed this mortal peril to the little girl, she would have smiled; she found life too bitter not to smile at death. But within these last few

minutes, she, who added to her physical ailments the Breton home-sickness—a moral sickness so well known, that colonels of regiments reckon on it in the Bretons who serve in their regiments—she loved Provins. The sight of that gold-coloured flower, that song, the presence of the friend of her childhood, had revived her as a plant long deprived of water recovers after hours of rain. She wanted to live; she did not believe that she had suffered!

She timidly stole into Sylvie's room, lighted the fire, left the hot-water pot, spoke a few words, went to awake her guardian, and then ran downstairs to take in the milk, the bread, and the other provisions supplied by the tradesmen. She stood for some time on the doorstep, hoping that Brigaut would have the wit to return; but Brigaut was already on the road to Paris. She had dusted the drawing-room and was busy in the kitchen, when she heard her cousin Sylvie coming downstairs. Mademoiselle Rogron made her appearance in a Carmelite grey silk dressing-gown, on her head a tulle cap decorated with bows, her false curls put on askew, her night-dress showing above the wrapper, her feet slipshod in her slippers. She inspected everything, and came to her little cousin, who was waiting to know what they would have for breakfast.

'So there you are, Miss Ladylove!' said Sylvie to Pierrette, in a half-merry, half-mocking tone.

'I beg your pardon, cousin?'

'You crept into my room like a sneak and out again in the same way; but you must have known that I should have something to say to you.'

'To me?'

'You have had a serenade this morning like a princess, neither more nor less.'

'A serenade?' exclaimed Pierrette.

'A serenade?' echoed Sylvie, mimicking her. 'And you have a lover.'

'Cousin, what do you mean by a lover?' Sylvie evaded the question, and said—

'Do you dare to say, Mademoiselle, that a man did not come under our windows and talk to you of marriage!'

Persecution had taught Pierrette the cunning indispensable to slaves; she boldly replied, 'I do not know what you mean——'

'Dog——' added the old maid in vinegar tones.

'Cousin,' said Pierrette humbly.

'And you did not get up, I suppose, and did not go barefoot to your window? Enough to give you some bad illness. Well, catch it, and serve you right!—And I suppose you did not talk to your lover?'

'No, cousin.'

'I knew you had a great many faults, but I did not know you told lies. Think of what you are about, Mademoiselle. You will have to tell your cousin Denis and me all about the scene of this morning, and explain it too; otherwise your guardian will have to take strong measures.'

The old maid, devoured by jealousy and curiosity, was trying intimidation. Pierrette did as all people must who are enduring beyond their strength—she kept silence. Silence is to all creatures thus attacked the only means of salvation; it fatigues the Cossack charges of the envious, the enemy's savage rushes; it results in a crushing and complete victory. What is more complete than silence? It is final. Is it not one of the modes of the Infinite?

Sylvie looked stealthily at Pierrette. The child coloured; but instead of flushing all over, the red lay in patches on her cheeks, in burning spots of symptomatic hue. On seeing these signals of ill-health, a mother would at once have changed her note; she would have taken the child on her knee, have questioned her, have acquired long since a thousand proofs of Pierrette's

perfect and beautiful innocence, have suspected her weakness, and understood that the blood and humours diverted from their course were thrown back on the lungs after disturbing the digestive functions. Those eloquent scarlet patches would have warned her of imminent and mortal danger. But an old maid to whom the feelings that guard the family, the needs of childhood, the care required in early womanhood were all unknown, could have none of the indulgence and the pity that are inspired by the thousand incidents of married and maternal life. The sufferings of misery, instead of softening her heart, had made it callous.

'She blushes—she has done wrong!' thought Sylvie. So Pierrette's silence received the worst construction.

'Pierrette,' said she, 'before your cousin Denis comes down we will have a little talk.—Come,' she went on in a milder tone. 'Shut the door to the street. If any one comes, they will ring; we shall hear.'

In spite of the damp fog rising from the river, Sylvie led Pierrette along the gravelled path that zigzagged between the grass-plots, to the edge of the terrace built in a so-called picturesque style of broken rockwork planted with flags and other water-plants. The old cousin now changed her tactics; she would try to catch Pierrette by gentleness. The hyena would play the cat.

'Pierrette,' said she, 'you are no longer a child; you will soon set foot in your fifteenth year, and it would not be at all astonishing if you had a lover.'

'But, cousin,' said Pierrette, raising her eyes of angelic sweetness to her cousin's cold, sour face, for Sylvie had put on her saleswoman expression, 'what is a lover?'

It was impossible to Sylvie to define to her brother's ward with accuracy and decency what she meant by a lover; instead of regarding the question as the result of adorable innocence, she treated it as mendacious.

'A lover, Pierrette, is a man who loves you and wishes to marry you.'

'Ah!' said Pierrette. 'In Brittany when two persons are agreed, we call the young man a suitor!'

'Well, understand that there is not the smallest harm in confessing your feeling for a man, my child. The harm is in secrecy. Have you, do you think, taken the fancy of any man who comes here?'

'I do not think so.'

'You do not love one of them?'

'No one.'

'Quite sure?'

'Quite sure.'

'Look me in the face, Pierrette.'

Pierrette looked at her cousin.

'And yet a man spoke to you from the Square this morning?'

Pierrette looked down.

'You went to your window, you opened it, and spoke to him.'

'No, cousin; I wanted to see what the weather was like, and I saw a country-man on the Square.'

'Pierrette, since your first Communion you have improved greatly, you are obedient and pious, you love your relations and God; I am pleased with you, but I never have told you so for fear of inflaming your pride.'

The horrible woman mistook the dejection, the submission, the silence of wretchedness for virtues! One of the sweetest things that brings comfort to the sufferer, to martyrs, to artists, in the midst of the Divine wrath roused in them by envy and hatred, is to meet with praise from some quarter whence they have always had blame and bad faith. So Pierrette looked up at her cousin with attentive eyes, and felt ready to forgive her all the pain she had caused her.

'But if it is all mere hypocrisy, if I am to find in you

a serpent I have cherished in my bosom, you would be an infamous, a horrible creature!'

'I do not think I have anything to blame myself for,' said Pierrette, feeling a dreadful pang at her heart on this sudden transition from unexpected praise to the terrible accent of the hyena.

'You know that lying is a mortal sin?'

'Yes, cousin.'

'Well, then, you stand before God!' said the old maid, pointing with a solemn gesture to the gardens and the sky. 'Swear to me that you do not know that countryman.'

'I will not swear,' said Pierrette.

'Ah! he was not a countryman! Little viper!'

Pierrette fled across the garden like a startled fawn, appalled by this moral dilemma. Her cousin called to her in an awful voice.

'The bell,' she replied.

'What a sly little wretch!' said Sylvie to herself. 'She has a perverse nature, and I am sure now that the little serpent has twisted herself round the Colonel. She has heard us say that he is a Baron. A Baroness, indeed! Little fool! Oh! I will be rid of her by placing her as an apprentice, and pretty soon too!'

Sylvie was so lost in thought that she did not see her brother coming down the walk and contemplating the mischief done by the frost to his dahlias.

'Well, Sylvie, what are you thinking about there? I thought you were looking at the fishes; sometimes they jump out of the water.'

'No,' said she.

'Well, how did you sleep?' and he proceeded to tell her his dreams of the past night. 'Do not you think that my face looks patchy?' a favourite word with the Rogrons. Since Rogron had loved—nay, we will not profane the word—had desired Mademoiselle de Charge-

bœuf, he had been very anxious about his appearance and himself.

At this moment Pierrette came down the steps and called to them that breakfast was ready. On seeing her little cousin, Sylvie's complexion turned green and yellow; all her bile rose. She examined the passage, and said that Pierrette ought to have polished it with foot-brushes.

'I will polish it if you wish,' replied the angel, not knowing how injurious this form of labour is to a young girl.

The dining-room was above blame. Sylvie sat down, and all through breakfast affected to want things that she never would have thought of in a calmer frame of mind, seeking for them simply to make Pierrette rise to fetch them, and always just as the poor child was beginning to eat. But mere nagging was not enough; she sought some subject for fault-finding, and fumed with internal rage at finding none. If they had been eating eggs, she would certainly have complained of the boiling of hers. She hardly replied to her brother's silly talk, and yet she looked only at him; her eyes avoided Pierrette, who was keenly aware of this behaviour.

Pierrette brought in the coffee for her cousins in a large silver cup, which served to heat the milk in, mixed with cream, in a saucepan of hot water. The brother and sister then added, to their taste, the black coffee which was made by Sylvie. When she had carefully prepared this dainty, Sylvie detected in it a faint cloud of coffee dust; she carefully skimmed it off the tawny mixture and looked at it, leaning over it to examine it more minutely. Then the storm burst.

'What is the matter?' asked Rogron.

'The matter! Miss, here, has put ashes in my coffee. Ashes in coffee are so nice! . . . Well, well! It is not astonishing; no one can do two things at once. Much she was thinking of the coffee! A blackbird

might have flown through the kitchen, and she would not have heeded it this morning! How should she see the ashes flying? And then—only her cousin's!—Much she cares about it!'

She went on in this way, while she elaborately laid on the edge of her plate some fine coffee that had passed through the filter, mixed with some grains of sugar that had not melted.

'But, cousin, that is coffee,' said Pierrette.

'So I am a liar now?' exclaimed Sylvie, looking at Pierrette, and scorching her by a fearful flash that her eyes could dart when she was angry.

These temperaments, which passion has never exhausted, have at command a great supply of the vital fluid. This phenomenon of extreme brightness in her eye under the influence of rage was all the more confirmed in Mademoiselle Rogron because formerly, in her shop, she had had occasion to try the power of her gaze by opening her eyes enormously wide, always to fill her dependants with salutary terror.

'I will teach you to give me the lie,' she went on; 'you, who deserve to be sent away from table to feed by yourself in the kitchen.'

'What is the matter with you both?' cried Rogron. 'You are as cross as two sticks this morning.'

'Oh, my lady knows what I mean! I am giving her time to make up her mind before speaking to you about it, for I am much kinder to her than she deserves.'

Pierrette looked through the window out on to the Square, so as not to meet her cousin's eyes, which frightened her.

'She pays no more heed than if I were talking to this sugar-basin! And she has sharp ears too; she can speak from the top of the house to answer some one below. . . . She is that perverse! Your ward is aggravating beyond words, and you need look for nothing good from her; do you hear me, Rogron?'

'What has she done that is so wicked?' asked her brother.

'At her age too! It is beginning young!' cried the old maid in a fury.

Pierrette rose to clear away, just to keep herself in countenance; she did not know which way to look. Though such language was nothing new to her, she never could get used to it. Her cousin's rage made her feel as though she had committed some crime. She wondered what her rage would be if she knew of Brigaut's escapade. Perhaps they would keep Brigaut away. All the thousand ideas of a slave crowded on her at once, thoughts swift and deep, and she resolved to resist by absolute silence as to an incident in which her conscience could see no evil.

She had to endure words so cruel, so harsh, insinuations so insulting, that on her return to the kitchen she was seized with cramp in the stomach and a violent attack of sickness. She dared not complain; she was not sure of getting any care. She turned pale and faint, said that she felt ill, and went up to bed, clinging to the banisters at every step, and believing that her last hour had come. 'Poor Brigaut!' thought she.

'She is ill,' said Rogron.

'She ill! It is all meagrims,' said Sylvie, loud enough to be overheard. 'She was not ill this morning, I can tell you!'

This last shot was too much for Pierrette, who crept to bed in tears, praying to God to remove her from this world.

For a month past Rogron had no longer carried the *Constitutionnel* to Gouraud; the Colonel obsequiously came to fetch the newspaper, to make talk, and take Rogron out when the weather was fine. Sylvie, sure of seeing the Colonel, and being able to question him, dressed herself coquettishly. The old maid thought she

achieved this by putting on a green gown, a little yellow cashmere shawl bordered with red, and a white bonnet with meagre grey feathers. At the hour when the Colonel was due, she settled herself in the drawing-room with her brother, making him keep on his dressing-gown and slippers.

'It is a fine morning, Colonel,' said Rogron, hearing Gouraud's heavy step; 'but I am not dressed, my sister perhaps wanted to go out, she left me to mind the house; wait for me.'

Rogron went off, leaving Sylvie with the Colonel.

'Where are you going? you are dressed like a goddess,' observed Gouraud, seeing a certain solemnity of expression on the old maid's battered face.

'Yes, I was going out; but as the child is not well, I must stay at home.'

'What is the matter with her?'

'I do not know; she asked to go to bed.'

Gouraud's cautiousness, not to say his distrust, was constantly on the alert as a result of his collusion with Vinet. The lawyer evidently had the best of it. He edited the paper, he ruled it as a master, and applied the profits to the editing; whereas the Colonel, the responsible stalking-horse, got little enough. Who was to be the député? Vinet. Who the great electioneer? Vinet. Who was always consulted? Vinet.

Then he knew, at least as well as Vinet, the extent and depth of the passion consuming Rogron for the fair Bathilde de Chargebœuf. This passion was becoming a mania, as all the lowest passions of men do. Bathilde's voice made the old bachelor thrill. Rogron, thinking only of his desire, concealed it; he dared not hope for such a match. The Colonel, to sound him, had told Rogron that he was about to propose for Bathilde's hand; Rogron had turned pale at the mere thought of such a formidable rival; he had become cold to Gouraud, almost hostile. Thus Vinet in every way ruled the

roast, while he, the Colonel, was tied to the house only by the doubtful bond of a love which, on his part, was but feigned, and on Sylvie's as yet unconfessed. When the lawyer had divulged the priest's manœuvre and advised him to throw over Sylvie and pay his addresses to Pierrette, Vinet had humoured his inclinations; still, as the Colonel analysed the true purport of this suggestion, and examined the ground on which he stood, he fancied he could discern in his ally some hope of making mischief between him and Sylvie, and taking advantage of the old maid's fears to make the whole of Rogron's fortune fall into Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf's hands.

Hence, when Rogron left him alone with Sylvie, the Colonel's acumen seized on the slight indications which betrayed some uneasiness in Sylvie. He saw that she had planned to be under arms and alone with him for a minute. Gouraud, who already vehemently suspected Vinet of playing him some malignant trick, ascribed this conference to a secret suggestion of this legal ape; he put himself on guard, as when he had been making a reconnaissance in the enemy's country, keeping an eye on the whole prospect, listening for the least sound, his mind alert, his hand on his weapon. It was the Colonel's weakness never to believe a word said by a woman; and when the old maid spoke of Pierrette, and said she was in bed at midday, he concluded that Sylvie had simply put her in disgrace in her room out of jealousy.

'The child is growing very pretty,' said he, in an indifferent tone.

'Yes, she will be pretty,' replied Mademoiselle Rogron.

'You ought now to send her to a shop in Paris,' added the Colonel. 'She would make a fortune. They look out for very pretty girls now in the milliners' shops.'

'Is that really your advice?' asked Sylvie, in an anxious voice.

'Good! I have hit it!' thought the Colonel. 'Vinet's

advice that Pierrette and I should marry by-and-by was only intended to place me in this old witch's black-books.—Why,' he said aloud, 'what do you expect to do with her? Do you not see a perfectly lovely girl, Bathilde de Chargebœuf, of noble birth, well connected, and left to become an old maid. No one will have anything to say to her. Pierrette has nothing; she will never marry. Do you suppose that youth and beauty have any attraction for me, for instance?—for me, who, as Captain of Artillery in the Imperial Guard from the first day when the Emperor had a guard, have had my feet in every capital in Europe, and known the prettiest women in them all?—Youth and beauty—they are deuced common and silly. Don't talk of them to me!

'At eight-and-forty,' he went on, adding to his age, 'when a man has gone through the retreat from Moscow and the dreadful campaign in France, his loins are a bit weary; I am an old fellow. Now, a wife like you would cosset me and take care of me; her fortune, added to my few thousand francs of pension, would secure me suitable comfort for my old age, and I should like her a thousand times better than a minx who would give me no end of trouble, who would be thirty and have her passions when I should be sixty and have the rheumatism. At my time of life we think of these things. And, between you and me, I may add that if I marry, I should hope to have no children.'

Sylvie's face was transparent to the Colonel all through this speech, and her reply was enough to assure him of Vinet's perfidy.

'So you are not in love with Pierrette?' she exclaimed.

'Bless me! Are you crazy, my dear Sylvie?' cried he. 'When we have lost all our teeth, is it the time to crack nuts? Thank God, I still have my wits, and know myself.'

Sylvie would not then say more about herself; she thought herself very wily in using her brother's name.

'My brother,' said she, 'had thought of your marrying her.'

'Your brother can never have had such a preposterous notion. A few days ago, to find out his secret, I told him that I was in love with Bathilde; he turned as white as your collar.'

'Is he in love with Bathilde?' said Sylvie.

'Madly! And Bathilde certainly loves only his money.'—('One for you, Vinet,' thought Gouraud).—'What should have made him speak of Pierrette?—No, Sylvie,' he went on, taking her hand and pressing it with meaning, 'since you have led to the subject'—he went close to her—'well'—he kissed her hand; he was a cavalry colonel, and had given proofs of courage—'know this: I want no wife but you. Though the marriage will look like a marriage for money, I feel true affection for you.'

'But it was I who wished that you should marry Pierrette; and if I were to give her my money—what then, Colonel?'

'But I do not want to have a wretched home, or to see, ten years hence, some young whippersnapper, such as Julliard, hovering round my wife, and writing verses to her in the newspaper. I am too much a man on that score; I will never marry a woman out of all proportion too young.'

'Well, Colonel, we will talk that over seriously,' said Sylvie, with a glance she thought amorous, and which was very like that of an ogress. Her cold, raw purple lips parted over her yellow teeth, and she fancied she was smiling.

'Here I am,' said Rogron, and he led away the Colonel, who bowed courteously to the old maid.

Gouraud was determined to hasten his marriage with Sylvie, and so become master of the house; promising himself that, through the influence he would acquire over Sylvie during the honeymoon, he would get rid both of

Bathilde and of Céleste Habert. So, as they walked, he told Rogron that he had been making fun of him the other day; that he had no intentions of winning Bathilde's heart, not being rich enough to take a wife who had no money. Then he confided his projects; he had long since chosen Sylvie for her admirable qualities; in short, he aspired to the honour of becoming his brother-in-law.

'Oh, Colonel! Oh, Baron! If only my consent were needed, it would be done as soon as legal delays should allow!' cried Rogron, delighted to find himself relieved of this terrible rival.

Sylvie spent the whole morning examining her own rooms to see if there were accommodation for a couple. She determined on building a second story for her brother, and having the first floor for herself and her husband; but she also promised herself, in accordance with the notions of every old maid, to put the Colonel to some tests, so as to judge of his heart and habits before making up her mind. She still had doubts, and wanted to make sure that Pierrette had no intimacy with the Colonel.

At dinner-time the girl came down to lay the cloth. Sylvie had been obliged to do the cooking, and had spotted her gown, exclaiming, 'Curse Pierrette!' For it was evident, indeed, that if Pierrette had cooked the dinner, Sylvie would not have had a grease-stain on her silk dress.

'So here you are, you little coddle. You are like the blacksmith's dog that sleeps under the forge and wakes at the sound of a saucepan. So you want me to believe that you are ill, you little story-teller!'

The one idea, 'You did not confess the truth as to what took place this morning, therefore everything you say is a lie,' was like a hammer with which Sylvie was prepared to hit incessantly on Pierrette's head and heart.

To Pierrette's great astonishment, Sylvie sent her, after

dinner, to dress for the evening. The liveliest imagination is no match for the energy which suspicion gives to the mind of an old maid. In such a case, the old maid beats politicians, attorneys and notaries, bill-brokers and misers. Sylvie promised herself that she would consult Vinet after looking well about her. She meant to keep Pierrette in the room, so as to judge for herself by the child's face whether the Colonel had told the truth.

The first to come were Madame de Chargebœuf and her daughter. By her cousin Vinet's advice, Bathilde had dressed with twice her usual elegance. She wore a most becoming blue cotton-velvet gown, the clear kerchief as before, bunches of grapes in garnets and gold for earrings, her hair in ringlets, the artful necklet, little black satin shoes, grey silk stockings, and Suède gloves, and then queenly airs and girlish coquettishness enough to catch every Rogron in the river. Her mother, calm and dignified, had preserved, as had Bathilde, a certain aristocratic impertinence by which these two women redeemed everything, betraying the spirit of their caste. Bathilde was gifted with superior intelligence, though Vinet alone had been able to discern it after the two months that these ladies had spent in his house. When he had sounded the depths of this girl, depressed by the uselessness of her youth and beauty, but enlightened by the contempt she felt for the men of a period when money was their sole idol, Vinet exclaimed in surprise—

'If I had but married you, Bathilde, by this time I should have been Keeper of the Seals; I would have called myself Vinet de Chargebœuf, and have sat on the right.'

Bathilde had no vulgar aims in her wish to be married; she would not marry for motherhood, nor for the sake of having a husband; she would marry to be free, to have a 'responsible publisher,' as it were—to be called Madame, and to act as men act. Rogron to her was a name; she thought she could make something of

this imbecile creature—a député, who might vote while she pulled the wires; she wanted to be revenged on her family, who had paid little heed to a penniless girl. Vinet, admiring and encouraging her ideas, had greatly extended and strengthened them.

'My dear cousin,' said he, explaining to her the influence exerted by women, and pointing out the sphere of action proper to them, 'do you suppose that Tiphaine, a profoundly mediocre man, can by his own merits rise to sit on the lower bench in Paris? It is Madame Tiphaine who got him returned as deputy; it is she who will carry him to Paris. Her mother, Madame Roguin, is a cunning body, who does what she pleases with du Tillet the banker, one of Nucingen's chief allies, both of them close friends of Keller's; and these three houses do great services to the Government or its most devoted adherents; the offices are on the best possible terms with these lynxes of the financial world, and men like those know all Paris. There is nothing to hinder Tiphaine from rising to be the Presiding Judge of one of the higher Courts.—Marry Rogron; we will make him deputy for Provins as soon as I have secured for myself some other constituency in Seine-et-Marne. Then you will have a receivership—one of those places where Rogron will have nothing to do but to sign his name. We will stick to the Opposition if it triumphs; but if the Bourbons remain in power, O how gently we will incline towards the centre! Besides, Rogron will not live for ever, and you can marry a title by-and-by. And then, if you are in a good position, the Chargebœufs will help us. Your poverty—like mine—has, no doubt, enabled you to estimate what men are worth; they are to be made use of only as post-horses. A man or a woman can take us from one stage to the next!'

Vinet had made a little Catherine de Medici of Bathilde. He left his wife at home, happy with her two

Bathilde—put he pretty foot on bar of the fen
Drawn and Etched by W. Boucher.

children, and always attended Madame de Chargebœuf and Bathilde to the Rogrons'. He appeared in all his glory as the tribune of Champagne. He wore neat gold spectacles, a silk waistcoat, a white cravat, black trousers, thin boots, a black coat made in Paris, a gold watch and chain. Instead of the Vinet of old—pale, lean, haggard, and gloomy—he exhibited the Vinet of the day, in all the bravery of a political personage; sure of his luck, he trod with the decision peculiar to a busy advocate familiar with the caverns of justice. His small, cunning head was so smartly brushed, and his clean-shaven chin gave him such a finished though cold appearance, that he looked quite pleasing, in the style of Robespierre. He might certainly become a delightful public prosecutor, with an elastic, dangerous, and deadly flow of eloquence, or an orator, with all the subtlety of Benjamin Constant. The acrimony and hatred which had formerly animated him had turned to perfidious softness. The poison had become medicine.

'Good evening, my dear, how are you?' said Madame de Chargebœuf to Sylvie.

Bathilde went straight to the fireplace, took off her hat, looked at herself in the glass, and put her pretty foot on the bar of the fender to display it to Rogron.

'What ails you, Monsieur?' said she, looking at him. 'You give me no greeting? Well, indeed! I may put on a velvet frock for your benefit . . .'

She stopped Pierrette, bidding her put her hat on a chair, and the girl took it from her, Bathilde resigning it to her as though Pierrette had been the housemaid.

Men are thought very fierce, and so are tigers; but neither tigers, nor vipers, nor diplomates, nor men of law, nor executioners, nor kings, can in their utmost atrocities come near the gentle cruelty, the poisoned sweetness, the savage scorn of young ladies to each other when certain of them think themselves superior to others in birth, fortune, or grace, and when marriage is in

question, or precedence, or, in short, any feminine rivalry. The 'Thank you, Mademoiselle,' spoken by Bathilde to Pierrette, was a poem in twelve cantos.

Her name was Bathilde, the other's was Pierrette; she was a Chargebœuf, the other a Lorrain! Pierrette was undersized and fragile, Bathilde was tall and full of vitality! Pierrette was fed by charity, Bathilde and her mother lived on their own money! Pierrette wore a stuff frock with a deep tucker, Bathilde dragged the serpentine folds of her blue velvet; Bathilde had the finest shoulders in the department, and an arm like a queen's, Pierrette's shoulder-blades and arms were skinny; Pierrette was Cinderella, Bathilde the fairy; Bathilde would get married, Pierrette would die a maid! Bathilde was worshipped, Pierrette had no one to love her! Bathilde had her hair dressed—she had taste, Pierrette hid her hair under a little cap, and knew nothing of the fashions! *Epilogue*—Bathilde was everything, Pierrette was nothing. The proud little Bretonne perfectly understood this cruel poem.

'Good evening, child,' said Madame de Chargebœuf from the summit of her grandeur, and with an accent given by her narrow pinched nose.

Vinet put the crowning touch to these insulting civilities by looking at Pierrette and saying, on three notes, 'Oh, oh, oh! How fine we are this evening, Pierrette!'

'I!' said the poor child. 'You should say that to your cousin, not to me. She is beautiful!'

'Oh, my cousin is always beautiful,' replied the lawyer. 'Do not you say so, Père Rogron?' he added, turning to the master of the house, and shaking hands with him.

'Yes,' said Rogron.

'Why force him to say what he does not think? I never was to his taste,' replied Bathilde, placing herself in front of Rogron. 'Is not that the truth?—Look at me.'

Rogron looked at her from head to foot, and gently closed his eyes, like a cat when its poll is scratched.

'You are too beautiful,' said he, 'too dangerous to look at.'

'Why?'

Rogron gazed at the fire-logs and said nothing.

At this moment Mademoiselle Habert came, followed by the Colonel. Céleste Habert, everybody's enemy now, had none but Sylvie on her side; but each one showed her all the greater consideration, politeness, and amiable attention because all were undermining her, so that she doubted between this display of civil interest and the distrust which her brother had implanted in her. The priest, though standing apart from the theatre of war, guessed everything; and so, when he perceived that his sister's hopes were at an end, he became one of the Rogrons' most formidable antagonists.

The reader can at once imagine what Mademoiselle Habert was like on being told that even if she had not been mistress—arch-mistress—of a school, she would still always have looked like a governess. Governesses have a particular way of putting on their caps. Just as elderly Englishwomen have monopolised the fashion of turbans, so governesses have the monopoly of these caps; the crown of the cap towers above the flowers, the flowers are more than artificial; stored carefully in a wardrobe, this cap is always new and always old, even on the first day. These old maids make it a point of honour to be like a painter's lay-figure; they sit on their haunches, not on their chairs. When they are spoken to they turn their whole body; and when their gowns creak, we are tempted to believe that the springs of the machinery are out of order. Mademoiselle Habert, a type of her kind, had a hard eye, a set mouth, and under her chin, furrowed with wrinkles, the limp and crumpled capstrings wagged and frisked as she moved. She had an added charm in two moles, rather

large and rather brown, with hairs that she left to grow like untied clematis. Finally, she took snuff, and without grace.

They sat down to the toil of boston. Sylvie had opposite to her Mademoiselle Habert, and the Colonel sat on one side, opposite Madame de Chargebœuf. Bathilde placed herself near her mother and Rogron. Sylvie put Pierrette between herself and the Colonel. Rogron opened another card-table in case Monsieur Néraud should come, and Monsieur Cournant and his wife. Vinet and Bathilde could both play whist, which was Monsieur and Madame Cournant's game. Ever since the Chargebœuf ladies—as they say in Provins—had been in the habit of coming to the Rogrons, the two lamps blazed on the chimney-piece between the candelabra and the clock, and the tables were lighted by wax lights at two francs a pound, which, however, was paid by winnings at cards.

'Now, Pierrette, my child, take your sewing,' said Sylvie with treacherous gentleness, seeing her watch the Colonel's play.

In public she always pretended to treat Pierrette very kindly. This mean deceit irritated the honest Bretonne, and made her despise her cousin. Pierrette fetched her embroidery; but as she set the stitches, she looked now and then at the Colonel's game. Gouraud seemed not to know that there was a little girl at his side. Sylvie began to think this indifference extremely suspicious. At a certain moment in the game the old maid declared *misère* in hearts; the pool was full of counters, and there were twenty-seven sous in it besides. The Cournants and Néraud had come. The old supernumerary judge, Desfondrilles—a man in whom the Minister of Justice had discerned the qualifications for a judge when appointing him examining magistrate, but who was never thought clever enough for a superior position—had for the last two months forsaken the Tiphaines, and

shown a leaning towards Vinet's party. He was now standing in front of the fire, holding up his coat-tails, and gazing at the gorgeous drawing-room in which Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf shone; for the setting of crimson looked as if it had been contrived on purpose to show off the beauty of this magnificent young woman. Silence reigned; Pierrette watched the play, and Sylvie's attention was diverted by the excitement of the game.

'Play that,' said Pierrette to the Colonel, pointing to a heart.

The Colonel led from a sequence in hearts; the hearts lay between him and Sylvie; the Colonel forced the ace, though it was guarded in Sylvie's hand by five small cards.

'It is not fair play! Pierrette saw my hand, and the Colonel allowed her to advise him!'

'But, Mademoiselle,' said Céleste, 'it was the Colonel's game to lead hearts since he found that you had one!'

The speech made Desfondrilles smile; he was a keen observer, who amused himself with watching all the interests at stake in Provins, where he played the part of *Rigaudin* in Picard's play of *la Maison en loterie*.

'It was the Colonel's game,' Cournant put in, without knowing anything about it.

Sylvie shot at Mademoiselle Habert a look of old maid against old maid, villainous but honeyed.

'Pierrette, you saw my hand,' said Sylvie, fixing her eyes on the girl.

'No, cousin.'

'I was watching you all,' said the archæological judge; 'I can bear witness that the little girl saw no one's hand but the Colonel's.

'Pooh! these little girls know very well how to steal a glance with their sweet eyes,' said Gouraud in alarm.

'Indeed!' said Sylvie.

'Yes,' replied Gouraud; 'she may have looked over

your hand to play you a trick. Was it not so, my beauty?'

'No,' said the honest Bretonne. 'I am incapable of such a thing! In that case I should have followed my cousin's game.'

'You know very well that you are a story-teller and a little fool into the bargain,' said Sylvie. 'Since what took place this morning, who can believe a word you say? You are a . . .'

Pierrette did not wait to hear her cousin end the sentence in her presence. Anticipating a torrent of abuse, she rose, went out of the room without a light, and up to her room. Sylvie turned pale with rage, and muttered between her teeth, 'I will pay her out!'

'Will you pay your losses?' said Madame de Chargebœuf.

At this moment poor Pierrette hit her head against the passage door which the judge had left open.

'Good! That serves her right!' cried Sylvie.

'What has happened?' asked Desfondrilles.

'Nothing that she does not deserve,' replied Sylvie.

'She has given herself some severe blow,' said Mademoiselle Habert.

Sylvie tried to evade paying her stakes by rising to see what Pierrette had done; but Madame de Chargebœuf stopped her.

'Pay us first,' said she, laughing; 'by the time you return you will have forgotten all about it.'

This suggestion, based on the bad faith the ex-haberdasher showed in the matter of her gambling debts, met with general approval. Sylvie sat down and thought no more of Pierrette; and no one was surprised at her indifference. All the evening Sylvie was absent-minded. When cards were over, at about half-past nine, she sank into an easy-chair by the fire, and only rose to take leave of her guests. The Colonel tortured her; she did not know what to think about him.

'Men are so false!' said she to herself as she fell asleep.

Pierrette had given herself a frightful blow against the edge of the door, just over her ear, where girls part their hair to put the forepart into curl-papers. Next morning there was a bad purple-veined bruise.

'God has punished you,' said Sylvie at breakfast; 'you disobeyed me, you showed a great want of respect in not listening to me, and in going away in the middle of my sentence. You have no more than you deserve.'

'Still,' said Rogron, 'you should put on a rag dipped in salt and water.'

'Pooh! It is nothing!' said Sylvie.

The poor child had come to the point when she thought her guardian's remark a proof of interest.

The week ended as it had begun, in constant torment. Sylvie became ingenious, and carried her refinement of tyranny to an extreme pitch. The Illinois, Cherokees, and Mohicans might have learnt of her. Pierrette dared not complain of her indefinite misery and the pain she suffered in her head. At the bottom of Sylvie's displeasure lay the girl's refusal to tell anything about Brigaut; and Pierrette, with Breton obstinacy, was determined to keep a very natural silence. Every one can imagine what a glance she gave Brigaut who, as she believed, would be lost to her if he were discovered, and whom she instinctively longed to keep near her, happy in knowing that he was at Provins. What a delight to her to see Brigaut again! The sight of the companion of her childhood was to her like the view an exile gets from afar of his native land; she looked on him as a martyr gazes at the sky when, during his torments, his eyes, blessed with double sight, see through to heaven.

Pierrette's parting glance had been so perfectly intelligible to the Major's son, that while he planed his boards, opened his compasses, took his measurements, and fitted

his pieces, he racked his brains for some means of corresponding with Pierrette. Brigaut at last hit on this extremely simple plan. At a certain hour at night Pierrette must let down a string, and he would tie a letter to the end of it. In the midst of her terrible sufferings from two maladies, an abscess which was forming in her head, and her general disorderment, Pierrette was sustained by the idea of corresponding with Brigaut. The same desire agitated both hearts; though apart, they understood each other! At every pang that made her heart flutter, at every pain that shot through her brain, Pierrette said to herself, 'Brigaut is at hand!' and then she could suffer without complaining.

On the next market-day after their first meeting in the church, Brigaut looked out for his little friend. Though he saw that she was pale, and trembling like a November leaf about to drop from the bough, without losing his head he went to bargain for some fruit at the stall where the terrible Sylvie was beating down the price of her purchases. Brigaut contrived to slip a note into Pierrette's hand, and he did it naturally, while jesting with the market woman, and with all the dexterity of a rake, as if he had never done anything else, so coolly did he manage it, in spite of the hot blood that sang in his ears and surged boiling from his heart, almost bursting the veins and arteries. On the surface he had the determination of an old housebreaker, and within the quaking heart of innocence, like mothers sometimes in their mortal anguish, when they are gripped between two dangers, between two precipices. Pierrette felt Brigaut's dizziness; she crushed the paper into her apron pocket; the pallor of her cheeks changed to the cherry redness of a fierce fire. These two children each unconsciously went through sensations enough for ten commonplace love-affairs. That instant left in their souls a wellspring of emotions. Sylvie, who did not recognise the Breton accent, could not suspect a lover

in Brigaut, and Pierrette came home with her treasure.

The letters of these two poor children were destined to serve as documents in a horrible legal squabble; for, but for that fatal circumstance, they never would have been seen. This is what Pierrette read that evening in her room :—

'My dear Pierrette,—At midnight, when everybody is asleep, but when I shall be awake for your sake, I will come every night under the kitchen window. You can let down out of your window a string long enough to reach me, which will make no noise, and tie to the end of it whatever you want to write to me. I will answer you in the same way. I knew that you had been taught to read and write by those wretched relations who were to do you so much good, and who are doing you so much harm! You, Pierrette, the daughter of a Colonel who died for France, are compelled by these monsters to cook for them! That is how your pretty colour and your fine health have vanished. What has become of my Pierrette? What have they done to her? I can see plainly that you are not happy.

'Oh! Pierrette, let us go back to Brittany. I can earn enough to give you everything you need; you may have three francs a day, for I earn from four to five, and thirty sous are plenty for me. Oh! Pierrette, how I have prayed to God for you since seeing you again. I have asked Him to give me all your pain, and to grant you all the pleasures.

'What have you to do with them that they keep you? Your grandmother is more to you than they are. These Rogrons are venomous; they have spoilt all your gaiety. You do not even walk at Provins as you used to move in Brittany. Let us go home to Brittany. In short, here I am to serve you, to do your bidding; and you must tell me what you wish. If you want money, I have sixty crowns of ours, and I shall have the grief of

sending them to you by the string instead of kissing your dear hands respectfully when I give you the money. Ah! my dear Pierrette, the blue sky has now for a long time been dark to me. I have not had two hours of joy since I put you into that ill-starred diligence; and when I saw you again, like a shade, that witch of a cousin disturbed our happiness. However, we shall have the comfort of praying to God together every Sunday; He will perhaps hear us the better. Not good-bye, dear Pierrette, only till to-night.'

This letter agitated her so greatly that she sat for above an hour reading and re-reading it; but she reflected, not without pain, that she had nothing to write with. So she made up her mind to the difficult expedition from her attic to the dining-room, where she could find ink, pen, and paper; and she accomplished it without waking Sylvie. A few minutes before midnight she had finished this letter, which was also produced in Court:—

'My Friend,—Oh yes, my friend! For there is no one but you, Jacques, and my grandmother, who loves me. God forgive me, but you are the only two persons I love, one as much as the other, neither more nor less. I was too little to remember my mother; but you, Jacques, and my grandmother, and my grandfather too, God rest his soul, for he suffered much from his ruin, which was mine too—in short, you are the only two remaining, and I love you as much as I am wretched! So to know how much I love you, you would have to know how much I suffer; but I do not wish that—it would make you too unhappy. I am spoken to as you would not speak to a dog; I am treated as if I were dirt; and in vain I examine myself as if I were before God, I cannot see that I am in fault towards them. Before you sang the bride's song to me I saw that God was good in my misery; for I prayed to Him to take me out of this world, and as I felt very ill, I said to myself, "God has heard me!"

'But since you have come, Brigaut, I want to go away with you to Brittany to see my grandmamma, who loves me, though they tell me she has robbed me of eight thousand francs. Brigaut, if they are really mine, can you get them? But it is all a lie; if we had eight thousand francs, grandmamma would not be at Saint-Jacques. I would not trouble that good saintly woman's last days by telling her of my miseries; it would be enough to kill her. Ah! if she could know that they make her grandchild wash the pots and pans—she who would say to me, "Leave that alone, my darling," when I tried to help her in her troubles; "leave it, leave it, my pet; you will spoil your pretty little hands." Well, my nails are clean at any rate! Many times I cannot carry the market basket, and the handle saws my arm as I come home from market.

'At the same time, I do not think that my cousins are cruel; but it is their way always to be scolding, and it would seem that I can never get away from them. My cousin Rogron is my guardian. One day when I meant to run away, as I was too miserable, and I told them so, my cousin Sylvie answered that the police would go after me, that the law was on my guardian's side; and I saw very clearly that cousins can no more take the place of our father and mother than the Saints can take the place of God.—My poor Jacques, what use could I make of your money? Keep it for our journey. Oh! how I have thought of you and Pen-Hoël and the large pool. We ate our cake first, out there, for I think I am getting worse. I am very ill, Jacques. I have such pains in my head that I could scream, and in my back and my bones; something round my loins that half kills me; and I have no appetite but for nasty things, leaves and roots, and I like the smell of printed paper. There are times when I should cry if I were alone, for I may not do anything as I wish; I am not even allowed to cry. I have to hide myself to offer up my tears to

Him from whom we receive those mercies which we call our afflictions. Was it not He who inspired you with the good idea of coming to sing the bride's song under my window?—Oh! Jacques, cousin Sylvie, who heard you, told me I had a lover. If you will be my lover, love me very much; I promise always to love you, as in the past, and to be your faithful servant,

'PIERRETTE LORRAIN.

'You will always love me, won't you?'

The girl had taken a crust of bread from the kitchen, in which she made a hole to stick her letter in, so as to weight the thread. At midnight, after opening her window with excessive caution, she let down her note with the bread, which could make no noise by tapping against the wall or the shutters. She felt the thread pulled by Brigaut, who broke it, and then went stealthily away. When he was in the middle of the Square she could see him, though indistinctly, in the starlight; but he could gaze at her in the luminous band projected by the candle. The two young things remained there for an hour, Pierrette signalling to him to go away, he going and she remaining, and he returning to his post, while Pierrette again waved to him to be gone. This was several times repeated, till the girl shut her window, got into bed, and blew out her light.

Once in bed, she went to sleep, happy though suffering; she had Brigaut's letter under her pillow. She slept the sleep of the persecuted, a sleep blessed by the angels, the sleep of golden and far-away glories full of the arabesques of heaven, which Raphael dreamed of and drew.

Her delicate physical nature was so responsive to her moral nature that Pierrette rose next morning as glad and light as a lark, beaming and gay. Such a change could not escape Sylvie's eye; this time, instead of

scolding her, she proceeded to watch her with the cunning of a raven.

'What makes her so happy?' was suggested by jealousy, and not by tyranny. If Sylvie had not been possessed by the idea of the Colonel, she would certainly have said as usual, 'Pierrette, you are very turbulent, or very heedless of what is said to you.' The old maid determined to spy on Pierrette, as only old maids can spy. The day passed in gloom and silence, like the hour before a storm.

'So you are no longer so ailing, Miss?' said Sylvie at dinner. 'Did not I tell you that she shams it all to worry us?' she exclaimed, turning to her brother, without waiting for Pierrette's reply.

'On the contrary, cousin, I have a sort of fever——'

'What sort of fever? You are as gay as a linnet. You have seen some one again perhaps?'

Pierrette shuddered, and kept her eyes on her plate.

'*Tartufe!*' cried Sylvie. 'At fourteen! Already! What a nature! Why, you will be a wretch indeed!'

'I do not know what you mean,' replied Pierrette, raising her fine luminous hazel eyes to her cousin's face.

'This evening,' said Sylvie, 'you will remain in the dining-room to sew by a candle. You are in the way in the drawing-room, and I will not have you looking over my hand to advise your favourites.'

Pierrette did not flinch.

'Hypocrite!' exclaimed Sylvie as she left the room.

Rogron, who could not understand what his sister was talking about, said to Pierrette, 'What is the matter between you two? Try, Pierrette, to please your cousin; she is most indulgent, most kind; and if she is put out with you, certainly you must be wrong. Why do you squabble? For my part, I like a quiet life. Look at Mademoiselle Bathilde; you should try to copy her.'

Pierrette could bear it all; Brigaut would come,

beyond doubt, at midnight to bring his answer, and this hope was her viaticum for the day. But she was exhausting her last strength. She did not go to sleep; she sat up listening to the clocks strike the hours, and fearing to make a sound. At last twelve struck; she softly opened her window, and this time she used a string she had made long enough by tying several bits together. She heard Brigaut's step, and when she drew up the string she read the following letter, which filled her with joy :—

'My dear Pierrette,—If you are in such pain, you must not tire yourself by sitting up for me. You will be sure to hear me call like a *Chouan*. My father luckily taught me to imitate their cry. So I shall repeat it three times, and you will know that I have come, and that you must let down the string, but I shall not come again for some few days. I hope then to have good news for you. Oh! Pierrette, not death! What are you thinking of? All my heart quaked; I thought I was dead myself at the mere idea. No, my Pierrette, you shall not die; you shall live happy, and soon be rescued from your persecutors. If I should not succeed in what I am attempting, to save you, I would go to the lawyers and declare in the face of heaven and earth how you are treated by your cruel relations.

'I am certain that you have only to endure a few days more: take patience. Pierrette, Brigaut is watching over you, as he did in the days when we went to slide on the pond, and I pulled you out of the deep hole where we were so nearly lost together. Good-bye, my dear Pierrette; in a few days we shall be happy, please God. Alas! I dare not tell you of the only thing that may hinder our meeting. But God loves us! So in a few days I shall be able to see my dear Pierrette in liberty, without a care, without any one hindering my looking at you, for I am very hungry to see you, O

Pierrette! Pierrette, who condescend to love me and to tell me so. Yes, Pierrette, I will be your lover, but only when I have earned the grand fortune you deserve, and till then I will be no more to you than a devoted servant whom you may command. Adieu.

'JACQUES BRIGAUT.'

This was what the young fellow did not tell Pierrette. He had written the following letter to Madame Lorrain at Nantes :—

'MADAME LORRAIN,—Your grand-daughter will die, killed by ill-usage, if you do not come to claim her back. I hardly knew her again ; and to enable you to judge for yourself of the state of things, I enclose in this letter one from Pierrette to me. You are reported here to have your grandchild's fortune, and you ought to justify yourself on this point. In short, if you can, come quickly ; we may yet be happy, and later you will find Pierrette dead.—I remain, with respect, your humble servant,

'JACQUES BRIGAUT.

'At Monsieur Frappier's, Master joiner, Grand' Rue, Provins.'

Brigaut only feared lest Pierrette's grandmother might be dead.

Though this letter from him, whom in her innocence she called her lover, was almost inexplicable to Pierrette, she accepted it with virgin faith. Her heart experienced the feeling which travellers in the desert know when they see from afar the palm grove round a well. In a few days her miseries would be ended, Brigaut said it ; she slept on the promise of her childhood's friend ; and yet, as she laid this letter with the former one, a dreadful thought found dreadful expression—

'Poor Brigaut,' said she to herself, 'he does not know the hole I have my feet in!'

Sylvie had heard Pierrette; she had also heard Brigaut below the window; she sprang up, rushed to look out on the Square through the shutter slats, and saw a man going away towards the house where the Colonel lived. In front of that Brigaut stopped. The old maid gently opened her door, went upstairs, was amazed at seeing a light in Pierrette's room, peeped through the keyhole, and could see nothing.

'Pierrette,' said she, 'are you ill?'

'No, cousin,' said Pierrette, startled.

'Then why have you a light in your room at midnight? Open your door. I must know what you are about.'

Pierrette, barefoot, opened the door, and Sylvie saw the skein of twine which Pierrette, never dreaming of being caught, had neglected to put away. Sylvie pounced upon it.

'What do you use that for?'

'Nothing, cousin.'

'Nothing?' said she. 'Very good. Lies again! You will not find that the way to heaven. Go to bed; you are cold.'

She asked no more, but disappeared, leaving Pierrette terror-stricken by such leniency. Instead of an outbreak, Sylvie had suddenly made up her mind to steal a march on the Colonel and Pierrette, to possess herself of the letters, and confound the couple who were deceiving her. Pierrette, inspired by danger, put the two letters inside her stays and covered them with calico.

This was the end of the loves of Pierrette and Brigaut.

Pierrette was glad of her friend's decision, for Sylvie's suspicions would be disconcerted by having nothing to feed on. And, in fact, Sylvie spent three nights out of her bed and three evenings in watching the innocent Colonel, without discovering anything in Pierrette's room,

or in the house or out of it, that hinted at their having any understanding. She sent Pierrette to confession, and took advantage of her absence to hunt through everything in the child's room as dexterously and as keenly as the spies and searchers at the gates of Paris. She found nothing. Her rage rose to the climax of human passion. If Pierrette had been present, she would certainly have beaten her without ruth. To a woman of this temper, jealousy was not so much a feeling as a possession; she breathed, she felt her heart beat, she had emotions in a way hitherto completely unknown to her; at the least movement she was on the alert, she listened to the faintest sounds, she watched Pierrette with gloomy concentration.

'That little wretch will be the death of me!' she would say.

Sylvie's severity to the child became at last the most refined cruelty, and aggravated the miserable state in which Pierrette lived. The poor little thing was constantly in a fever, and the pain in her head became intolerable. By the end of a week she displayed to the frequenters of the Rogrons' house a face of suffering which must certainly have softened any less cruel egotism; but Doctor Néraud, advised perhaps by Vinet, did not call for more than a week. The Colonel, suspected by Sylvie, was afraid she might break off their marriage if he showed the smallest anxiety about Pierrette; Bathilde accounted for her indisposition by simple causes, in no way dangerous.

At last, one Sunday evening, when the drawing-room was full of company, Pierrette could not endure the pain; she fainted completely away; and the Colonel, who was the first to observe that she had lost consciousness, lifted her up and carried her on to a sofa.

'She did it on purpose,' said Sylvie, looking at Mademoiselle Habert and the other players.

'Your cousin is very ill, I assure you,' said the Colonel.

'She was very well in your arms,' retorted Sylvie, with a hideous smile.

'The Colonel is right,' said Madame de Chargebœuf; 'you ought to send for a doctor. This morning in church every one was talking of Mademoiselle Lorrain's state as they came out—it is obvious.'

'I am dying,' said Pierrette.

Desfondrilles called to Sylvie to unfasten the girl's frock. Sylvie complied, saying, 'It is all a sham!'

She undid the dress, and was going to loosen the stays. Then Pierrette found superhuman strength; she sat up, and exclaimed, 'No, no; I will go to bed.'

Sylvie had touched her stays, and had felt the papers. She allowed Pierrette to escape, saying to everybody, 'Well, do you think she is so very ill? It is all put on; you could never imagine the naughtiness of that child.'

She detained Vinet at the end of the evening; she was furious, she was bent on revenge; she was rough with the Colonel as he bid her good-night. Gouraud shot a glance at Vinet that seemed to pierce him to the very bowels, and mark the spot for a bullet. Sylvie begged Vinet to remain. When they were alone, the old maid began—

'Never in my life, nor in all my days, will I marry the Colonel!'

'Now that you have made up your mind, I may speak. The Colonel is my friend; still, I am yours rather than his. Rogron has done me services I can never forget. I am as firm a friend as I am an implacable enemy. Certainly, when once I am in the Chamber you will see how I shall rise, and I will make Rogron a Receiver-General.—Well, swear to me never to repeat a word of our conversation!' Sylvie nodded assent. 'In the first place, our gallant Colonel is an inveterate gambler.'

'Indeed!' said Sylvie.

'But for the difficulties this passion has got him into, he might perhaps have been a Marshal of France,' the

lawyer went on. 'So he might squander all your fortune. But he is a deep customer. Do not believe that married people have or have not children, and you know what will happen to you. No. If you wish to marry, wait till I am in the Chamber, and then you can marry old Desfondrilles, who will be President of the Court here. To revenge yourself, make your brother marry Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf; I will undertake to get her consent; she will have two thousand francs a year, and you will be as nearly connected with the Chargebœufs as I am. Take my word for it, the Chargebœufs will call us cousins some day.'

'Gouraud is in love with Pierrette,' replied Sylvie.

'He is quite capable of it,' said Vinet; 'and quite capable of marrying her after your death.'

'A pretty little scheme!' said she.

'I tell you, he is as cunning as the devil. Make your brother marry, and announce that you intend to remain unmarried and leave your money to your nephews or nieces; you will thus hit Pierrette and Gouraud by the same blow, and you will see how foolish he will look.'

'To be sure,' cried the old maid; 'I can catch them. She shall go into a shop, and will have nothing. She has not a penny. Let her do as we did, and work.'

Vinet having got his idea into Sylvie's head, and knowing her obstinacy, left the house. The old maid ended by thinking that the plan was her own.

Vinet found the Colonel outside, smoking a cigar while he waited for him.

'Hold hard!' said the Colonel. 'You have pulled me to pieces, but there are stones enough in the ruins to bury you.'

'Colonel!'

'There is no "Colonel" in the case. I am going to lead you a dance. In the first place, you will never be deputy——'

'Colonel!'

'I can command ten votes, and the election depends on——'

'Colonel, just listen to me. Is there no one in the world but old Sylvie? I have just been trying to clear you. You are accused and proved guilty of writing to Pierrette; she has seen you coming out of your house at midnight to stand below the girl's window——'

'Well imagined!'

'She means her brother to marry Bathilde, and will keep her fortune for their children.'

'Will Rogron have any?'

'Yes,' said Vinet. 'But I promise to find you a young and agreeable woman with a hundred and fifty thousand francs.—Are you mad? Can you and I afford to quarrel? Things have turned against you in spite of me; but you do not know me.'

'Well, we must learn to know each other,' replied the Colonel. 'Get me a wife with fifty thousand crowns before the elections—otherwise, your servant. I do not like awkward bed-fellows, and you have pulled all the blankets to your side. Good-night.'

'You will see,' said Vinet, shaking hands affectionately with the Colonel.

At about one in the morning three clear, low hoots, like those of an owl, admirably mimicked, sounded in the Place; Pierrette heard them in her fevered sleep. She got up, quite damp, opened her window, saw Brigaut, and threw out a ball of silk, to which he tied a letter.

Sylvie, excited by the events of the evening and her own deliberations, was not asleep; she was taken in by the owl's cry.

'Ah! what a bird of ill-omen!—But, hark! Pierrette is out of bed. What does she want?'

On hearing the attic window open, Sylvie rushed to her own window and heard Brigaut's paper rustle against the shutters. She tied her jacket strings, and

nimbly mounted the stairs to Pierrette's room; she found her untying the silk from round the letter.

'So I have caught you!' cried the old maid, going to the window, whence she saw Brigaut take to his heels. 'Give me that letter.'

'No, cousin,' said the girl, who, by one of the stupendous inspirations of youth, and sustained by her spirit, rose to the dignity of resistance which we admire in the history of some nations reduced to desperation.

'What, you will not?' cried Sylvie, advancing on her cousin, and showing her a hideous face full of hatred, and distorted by rage.

Pierrette drew back a step or two to have time to clutch her letter in her hand, which she kept shut with invincible strength. On seeing this, Sylvie seized Pierrette's delicate white hand in her lobster's claws, and tried to wrench it open. It was a fearful struggle, an infamous struggle, as everything is that dares to attack thought, the only treasure that God has set beyond the reach of power, and keeps as a secret bond between the wretched and Himself.

The two women, one dying, the other full of vigour, looked steadfastly at each other. Pierrette's eyes flashed at her torturer such a look as the Templar's who received on his breast the blows from a mace in the presence of Philippe le Bel. The King could not endure that fearful gleam, and retired appalled by it; Sylvie, a woman, and a jealous woman, answered that magnetic glance by an ominous glare. Awful silence reigned. The Bretonne's clenched fingers resisted her cousin's efforts with the tenacity of a steel vice. Sylvie wrung Pierrette's arm, and tried to open her hand; as this had no effect, she vainly set her nails in the flesh. Finally, madness reinforced her anger; she raised Pierrette's fist to her teeth to bite her fingers and subdue her by pain. Pierrette still defied her with the terrifying gaze of innocence. The old maid's fury was roused to such a pitch that she was

blind to all else; gripping Pierrette's arm, she beat the girl's fist on the window-sill, and on the marble chimney-piece, as we beat a nut to crack it and get at the kernel.

'Help, help!' cried Pierrette; 'I am being killed.'

'So you scream, do you, when I find you with a lover in the middle of the night?'

And she hit again and again without mercy.

'Help, help!' cried Pierrette, whose fist was bleeding.

At this moment there were violent blows on the street door. Both equally exhausted, the two women ceased.

Rogron, aroused and anxious, not knowing what was happening, had got out of bed, gone to his sister's room, and not found her; then he was alarmed, went down and opened the door, and was almost upset by Brigaut, followed by what seemed a phantom.

At the same instant Sylvie's eyes fell on Pierrette's stays; she remembered having felt the papers in them; she threw herself on them like a tiger on his prey, twisted the stays round her hand, and held them up with a smile, as an Iroquois smiles at his foe before scalping him.

'I am dying——' said Pierrette, dropping on her knees. 'Who will save me?'

'I will,' cried a woman with white hair, turning on Pierrette an aged, parchment face in which a pair of grey eyes sparkled.

'Ah, grandmother, you have come too late!' cried the poor child, melting into tears.

Pierrette went to fall on her bed, bereft of all her strength, and half killed by the reaction, which in a sick girl was inevitable after such a violent struggle. The tall withered apparition took her in her arms as a nurse takes a child, and went out, followed by Brigaut, without saying a word to Sylvie, at whom, by a tragic glance, she hurled majestic accusation. The sight of this dignified old woman in her Breton costume, shrouded in her

coiffe, which is a sort of long cloak made of black cloth, and accompanied by the terrible Brigaut, appalled Sylvie: she felt as if she had seen death.

She went downstairs, heard the door shut, and found herself face to face with her brother, who said to her, 'They have not killed you then?'

'Go to bed,' said Sylvie. 'To-morrow morning we will see what is to be done.'

She got into bed again, unpicked the stays, and read Brigaut's two letters, which utterly confounded her. She went to sleep in the strangest perplexity, never dreaming of the terrible legal action to which her conduct was to give rise.

Brigaut's letter to the widow Lorrain had found her in the greatest joy, which was chequered when she read it. The poor old woman, now past seventy, had been dying of grief at having to live without Pierrette at her side; she only comforted herself for her loss by the belief that she had sacrificed herself to her grandchild's interests. She had one of those ever-young hearts to which self-sacrifice gives strength and vitality. Her old husband, whose only joy Pierrette had been, had grieved for the child; day after day he had looked for her and missed her. It was an old man's sorrow; the sorrow old men live on, and die of at last.

Everybody can therefore imagine the joy felt by this poor woman, shut up in an almshouse, on hearing of one of those actions which, though rare, still are heard of in France.

After his failure François Joseph Collinet, the head of the house of Collinet, sailed for America with his children. He was a man of too much good feeling to sit down at Nantes, ruined and bereft of credit, in the midst of the disasters caused by his bankruptcy. From 1814 till 1824 this brave merchant, helped by his children and by his cashier, who remained faithful to him and lent him the

money to start again, valiantly worked to make a second fortune. After incredible efforts, that were crowned by success, by the eleventh year he was able to return to Nantes and rehabilitate himself, leaving his eldest son at the head of the American house. He found Madame Lorrain of Pen-Hoël at Saint-Jacques, and beheld the resignation with which the most hapless of his fellow-victims endured her penury.

'God forgive you!' said the old woman, 'since you give me on the brink of the grave the means of securing my grandchild's happiness. I, alas! can never see my poor old man's credit re-established.'

Monsieur Collinet had brought to his creditor her capital and interest at trade rates, altogether about forty-two thousand francs. His other creditors, active, wealthy, and capable men, had kept themselves above water, while the Lorrains' overthrow had seemed to old Collinet irremediable; he had now promised the widow that he would rehabilitate her husband's good name, finding that it would involve an expenditure of only about forty thousand francs more. When this act of generous restitution became known on 'change at Nantes, the authorities were eager to re-open its doors to Collinet before he had surrendered to the Court at Rennes; but the merchant declined the honour, and submitted to all the rigour of the Commercial Code.

Madame Lorrain, then, had received forty-two thousand francs the day before the post brought her Brigaut's letters. As she signed her receipt, her first words were—

'Now I can live with my Pierrette, and let her marry poor Brigaut, who will make a fortune out of my money!'

She could not sit still; she fussed and fidgeted, and wanted to set out for Provins. And when she had read the fatal letters, she rushed out into the town like a mad thing, asking how she could get to Provins with the swiftness of lightning. She set out by mail when she heard of the

Governmental rapidity of that conveyance. From Paris she took the Troyes coach; she had arrived at eleven that evening at Frappier's, where Brigaut, seeing the old Bretonne's deep despair, at once promised to fetch her grand-daughter, after describing Pierrette's state in a few words. Those few words so alarmed the old woman that she could not control her impatience; she ran out to the Square. When Pierrette screamed, her grandmother's heart was pierced by the cry as keenly as was Brigaut's. The two together would no doubt have roused all the inhabitants, if Rogron, in sheer terror, had not opened the door. This cry of a girl in extremity filled the old woman with strength as great as her horror; she carried her dear Pierrette all the way to Frappier's, where his wife had hastily arranged Brigaut's room for Pierrette's grandmother. So in this miserable lodging, on a bed scarcely made, they laid the poor child; she fainted away, still keeping her hand closed, bruised and bleeding as it was, her nails set in the flesh. Brigaut, Frappier, his wife, and the old woman contemplated Pierrette in silence, all lost in unutterable astonishment.

'Why is her hand covered with blood?' was the grandmother's first question.

Pierrette, overcome by the sleep which follows such an extreme exertion of strength, and knowing that she was safe from any violence, relaxed her fingers. Brigaut's letter fell out as an answer.

'They wanted to get my letter,' said Brigaut, falling on his knees and picking up the note he had written, desiring his little friend to steal softly out of the Rogrons' house. He piously kissed the little martyr's hand.

Then there was a thing which made the joiners shudder: it was the sight of old Madame Lorrain, a sublime spectre, standing by her child's bedside. Horror and vengeance fired with fierce expression the myriad wrinkles that furrowed her skin of ivory yellow; on her brow, shaded by thin grey locks, sat divine wrath.

With the powerful intuition granted to the aged as they approach the tomb, she read all Pierrette's life, of which indeed she had been thinking all the way she had come.

She understood the malady that threatened the life of her darling. Two large tears gathered painfully in her grey-and-white eyes, which sorrow had robbed of lashes and eyebrows; two beads of grief that gave a fearful moisture to those eyes, and swelled and rolled over those withered cheeks without wetting them.

'They have killed her!' she said at last, clasping her hands.

She dropped on her knees, which hit two sharp blows on the floor; she was making a vow, no doubt, to Sainte-Anne d'Auray, the most powerful Madonna of Brittany.

'A doctor from Paris,' she next said to Brigaut. 'Fly there, Brigaut. Go!'

She took the artisan by the shoulders and turned him round with a despotic gesture.

'I was coming at any rate, my good Brigaut,' she said, calling him back. 'I am rich.—Here!' She untied the ribbon that fastened her bodice across her bosom, took out a paper, in which were wrapped forty-two bank-notes, and said, 'Take as much as you need; bring back the greatest doctor in Paris.'

'Keep that,' said Frappier; 'he could not change a bank-note at this hour. I have money; the diligence will pass presently, he will be sure to find a place in it. But would it not be better first to consult Monsieur Martener, who will give us the name of a Paris physician? The diligence is not due for an hour; we have plenty of time.'

Brigaut went off to rouse Monsieur Martener. He brought the doctor back with him, not a little surprised to find Mademoiselle Lorrain at Frappier's. Brigaut described to him the scene that had just taken place at the Rogrons'. The loquacity of a despairing lover threw light on this domestic drama, though the doctor could

not suspect its horrors or its extent. Martener gave Brigaut the address of the famous Horace Bianchon, and Jacques and his master left the room on hearing the approach of the diligence.

Monsieur Martener sat down, and began by examining the bruises and wounds on the girl's hand, which hung out of bed.

'She did not hurt herself in such a way,' said he.

'No, the dreadful creature I was so unhappy as to trust her with was torturing her,' said the grandmother. 'My poor Pierrette was crying out, "Help! Murder!" It was enough to touch the heart of an executioner.'

'But why?' said the doctor, feeling Pierrette's pulse. 'She is very ill,' he went on, bringing the light close to the bed. 'We shall hardly save her,' said he, after looking at her face. 'She must have suffered terribly, and I cannot understand their having left her without care.'

'It is my intention,' said the old woman, 'to appeal to justice. Had these people, who wrote to ask me for my grand-daughter, saying that they had twelve thousand francs a year, any right to make her their cook and give her work far beyond her strength?'

'They did not choose to see that she was obviously suffering from one of the ailments to which young girls are sometimes subject, and needed the greatest care!' cried Monsieur Martener.

Pierrette was roused, partly by the light held by Madame Frappier so as to show her face more clearly, and partly by the dreadful pain in her head, caused by reactionary collapse after her struggle.

'Oh, Monsieur Martener, I am very ill,' said she, in her pretty voice.

'Where is the pain, my child?' said the doctor.

'There,' she replied, pointing to a spot on her head above the left ear.

'There is an abscess!' cried the doctor, after feeling Pierrette's head for some time, and questioning her as

to the pain. 'You must tell us everything, my dear, to enable us to cure you. Why is your hand in this state? You did not injure it like this yourself.'

Pierrette artlessly told the tale of her struggle with her cousin Sylvie.

'Make her talk to you,' said the doctor to her grandmother, 'and learn all about it. I will wait till the surgeon arrives from Paris, and we will call in the head surgeon of the hospital for a consultation. It seems to me very serious. I will send a soothing draught to give Mademoiselle some sleep. She needs rest.'

The old Bretonne, left alone with her grandchild, made her tell everything, by exerting her influence over her, and explaining to her that she was rich enough for all three, so that Brigaut need never leave them. The poor child confessed all her sufferings, never dreaming of the lawsuit she was leading up to. The monstrous conduct of these two loveless beings, who knew nothing of family affection, revealed to the old woman worlds of torment, as far from her conception as the manners of the savage tribes must have been to the first travellers who penetrated the savannahs of America.

Her grandmother's presence, and the certainty of living with her for the future in perfect ease, lulled Pierrette's mind as the draught lulled her body. The old woman watched by her, kissing her brow, hair, and hands, as the holy women may have kissed Jesus while laying Him in the sepulchre.

By nine in the morning Monsieur Martener went to the President of the Courts, and related to him the scene of the past night between Sylvie and Pierrette, the moral and physical torture, the cruelty of every kind inflicted by the Rogrons on their ward, and the two fatal maladies which had been developed by this ill-usage. The President sent for the notary, Monsieur Auffray, a connection of Pierrette's on her mother's side.

At this moment the war between the Vinet party and the Tiphaine party was at its height. The gossip circulated in Provins by the Rogrons and their adherents as to the well-known *liaison* between Madame Roguin and du Tillet the banker, and the circumstances of Monsieur Roguin's bankruptcy—Madame Tiphaine's father was said to have committed forgery—hit all the more surely because, though it was scandal, it was not calumny. Such wounds pierced to the bottom of things; they attacked self-interest in its most vital part. These statements, repeated to the partisans of Tiphaine by the same speakers who also reported to the Rogrons all the sarcasms uttered by the 'beautiful Madame Tiphaine' and her friends, added fuel to their hatred, complicated as it was with political feeling.

The irritation caused in France at that time by party spirit, which had waxed excessively violent, was everywhere bound up, as it was at Provins, with imperilled interests and offended and antagonistic private feelings. Each coterie eagerly pounced on anything that might damage its rival. Party animosity was not less implicated than personal conceit in even trivial questions, which were often carried to great lengths. A whole town threw itself into some dispute, raising it to the dignity of a political contest. And so the President discerned, in the action between Pierrette and the Rogrons, a means of confuting, descrediting, and humiliating the owners of that drawing-room where plots were hatched against the monarchy, and where the Opposition newspaper had had its birth.

He sent for the public prosecutor. Then Monsieur Lesourd, Monsieur Auffray the notary—appointed the legal guardian of Pierrette—and the President of the Court discussed in the greatest privacy, with Monsieur Martener, what steps could be taken. The legal guardian was to call a family council (a formality of French law), and, armed with the evidence of the three

medical men, would demand the dismissal of Rogron from his guardianship. The case thus formulated would be brought before the tribunal, and then Monsieur Lesourd would get it carried into the Criminal Court by demanding an inquiry.

By mid-day all Provins was in a stir over the strange reports of what had taken place at the Rogrons' in the course of the past night. Pierrette's screams had been remotely heard in the Square, but they had not lasted long; no one had got up; but everybody had asked in the morning, 'Did you hear the noise and screaming at about one o'clock? What was it?' Gossip and comment had given such magnitude to the horrible drama that a crowd collected in front of Frappier's shop, everybody cross-questioning the honest joiner, who described the girl's arrival at his house with her hand bleeding and her fingers mangled.

At about one in the afternoon a post-chaise, containing Doctor Bianchon, by whom sat Brigaut, stopped at Frappier's door, and Madame Frappier went off to the hospital to fetch Monsieur Martener and the head surgeon. Thus the reports heard in the town received confirmation.

The Rogrons were accused of having intentionally maltreated their young cousin, and endangered her life. The news reached Vinet at the Law Courts; he left his business and hurried to the Rogrons'. Rogron and his sister had just finished breakfast. Sylvie had avoided telling her brother of her defeat during the night; she allowed him to question her, making no reply but: 'It does not concern you.' And she bustled to and fro between the kitchen and dining-room to avoid all discussion.

She was alone when Vinet walked in.

'Do you know nothing of what is going on?' asked the lawyer.

'No,' said Sylvie.

'You are going to have a criminal action brought against you for the way in which matters stand with Pierrette.'

'A criminal action!' said Rogron, coming in. 'Why? What for?'

'In the first place,' said Vinet, looking at Sylvie, 'tell me exactly, without subterfuge, all that took place last night, as though you were before God, for there is some talk of cutting off Pierrette's hand.'

Sylvie turned ashy pale and shivered.

'Then there was something!' said the lawyer.

Mademoiselle Rogron told the story, trying to justify herself; but on being cross-questioned, related all the details of the horrible conflict.

'If you have only broken her fingers, you will only appear in the Police Court; but if her hand has to be amputated, you will find yourself brought up at the Assizes. The Tiphaines will do anything to get you there.'

Sylvie, more dead than alive, confessed her jealousy, and, which was even harder to bring out, how her suspicions had blundered.

'What a case for trial!' exclaimed Vinet. 'You and your brother may be ruined by it; you will be thrown over by many of your friends even if you gain it. If you do not come out clear, you will have to leave Provins.'

'Oh! my dear Monsieur Vinet—you who are such an able lawyer,' cried Rogron, horrified, 'advise us, save us!'

Vinet dexterously fomented the fears of these two fools to the utmost, and declared positively that Madame and Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf would hesitate to go to their house again. To be forsaken by these two ladies would be a fatal condemnation. In short, after an hour of magnificent manœuvring, it was agreed that in order to induce Vinet to save the Rogrons, he must have an interest at stake in defending him in the eyes

of all Provins. In the course of the evening Rogron's engagement to marry Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf was to be announced. The banns were to be published on Sunday. The marriage-contract would at once be drawn up by Cournant, and Mademoiselle Rogron would figure in it as abandoning, in consideration of this alliance, the capital of her share of the estate by a deed of gift to her brother, reserving only a life-interest. Vinet impressed on Rogron and his sister the necessity of having a draft of this deed drawn up two or three days before that event, so as to put Madame and Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf under the necessity, in public opinion, of continuing their visits to the Rogrons.

'Sign that contract, and I will undertake to get you out of the scrape,' said the lawyer. 'It will no doubt be a hard fight, but I will go into it body and soul, and you will owe me a very handsome taper.'

'Yes, indeed,' said Rogron.

By half-past eleven the lawyer was empowered to act for them, alike as to the contract and as to the management of the case. At noon the President was informed that a summons was applied for by Vinet against Brigaut and the widow Lorrain for abducting Pierrette Lorrain, a minor, from the domicile of her guardian. Thus the audacious Vinet took up the offensive, putting Rogron in the position of a man having the law on his side. This, indeed, was the tone in which the matter was commented on in the Law Courts. The President postponed hearing the parties till four o'clock. The excitement of the town over all these events need not be described. The President knew that the medical consultation would be ended by three o'clock; he wished that the legal guardian should appear armed with the physicians' verdict.

The announcement of Rogron's engagement to the fair Bathilde de Chargebœuf, and of the deed of gift added by Sylvie to the contract, promptly made the

Rogrons two enemies—Mademoiselle Habert and the Colonel, who thus saw all their hopes dashed. Céleste Habert and the Colonel remained ostensibly friends to the Rogrons, but only to damage them more effectually. So, as soon as Monsieur Martener spoke of the existence of an abscess on the brain in the haberdashers' hapless victim, Céleste and the Colonel mentioned the blow Pierrette had given herself that evening when Sylvie had driven her out of the room, and remembered Mademoiselle Rogron's cruel and barbarous remarks. They related various instances of the old maid's utter indifference to her ward's sufferings. Thus these friends of the couple admitted serious wrong, while affecting to defend Sylvie and her brother.

Vinet had foreseen this storm; but Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf was about to acquire the whole of the Rogrons' fortune, and he promised himself that in a few weeks he should see her living in the nice house on the Place, and reign conjointly with her over Provins; for he was already scheming for a coalition with the Bréauteys to serve his own ambitions.

From twelve o'clock till four all the ladies of the Tiphaine faction—the Garcelands, the Guépins, the Julliards, Mesdames Galardon, Guénée, and the sous-préfet's wife—all sent to inquire after Mademoiselle Lorrain. Pierrette knew nothing whatever of this commotion in the town on her behalf. In the midst of acute suffering she felt ineffably happy at finding herself between her grandmother and Brigaut, the objects of her affection. Brigaut's eyes were constantly full of tears, and the old woman petted her beloved grandchild.

God knows the grandmother spared the three men of science none of the details she had heard from Pierrette about her life with the Rogrons! Horace Bianchon expressed his indignation in unmeasured terms. Horrified by such barbarity, he insisted that the other doctors of the town should be called in; so Monsieur Néraud was

present, and was requested, as being Rogron's friend, to contradict if he could the terrible inferences derived from the consultation, which, unfortunately for Rogron, were unanimously subscribed to. Néraud, who was already credited with having made Pierrette's maternal grandmother die of grief, was in a false position, of which Martener adroitly took advantage, delighted to overwhelm the Rogrons, and also to compromise Monsieur Néraud, his antagonist. It is needless to give the text of this document, which also was produced at the trial. If the medical terms of Molière's age were barbarous, those of modern medicine have the advantage of such extreme plain speaking, that an account of Pierrette's maladies, though natural, and unfortunately common, would shock the ear. The verdict was indisputably final, attested by so famous a name as that of Horace Bianchon.

After the Court sitting was over, the President remained in his place, while Pierrette's grandmother came in with Monsieur Auffray, Brigaut, and a considerable crowd. Vinet appeared alone. This contrast struck the spectators, including a vast number of merely inquisitive persons. Vinet, who had kept his gown on, raised his hard face to the President, settling his spectacles as he began in his harsh, sawing tones to set forth that certain strangers had made their way into the house of Monsieur and Mademoiselle Rogron by night, and had carried away the girl Lorrain, a minor. Her guardian claimed the protection of the Court to recover his ward.

Monsieur Auffray, as the guardian appointed by the Court, rose to speak.

'If Monsieur le Président,' said he, 'will take into his consideration this consultation, signed by one of the most eminent Paris physicians, and by all the doctors and surgeons of Provins, he will perceive how unreasonable is Monsieur Rogron's claim, and what sufficient reasons induced the minor's grandmother to release her at once from her tormentors. The facts are these: A deliberate

consultation, signed unanimously by a celebrated Paris doctor, sent for in great haste, and by all the medical authorities of the town, ascribe the almost dying state of the ward to the ill-treatment she had received at the hands of the said Rogron and his sister. As a legal formality a family council will be held, with the least possible delay, and consulted on the question whether the guardian ought not to be held disqualified for his office. We petition that the minor shall not be sent back to her guardian's house, but shall be placed in the hands of any other member of the family whom Monsieur le Président may see fit to designate.'

Vinet wanted to reply, saying that the document of the consultation ought to be communicated to him that he might contravene it.

'Certainly not to Vinet's side,' said the President severely, 'but perhaps to the public prosecutor. The case is closed.'

At the foot of the petition the President wrote the following injunction :—

'Inasmuch as that by a consultation unanimously signed by the medical faculty of this town and by Doctor Bianchon of the medical faculty of Paris, it is proved that the girl Lorrain, a minor, claimed by her guardian Rogron, is in a very serious state of sickness brought on by the ill-usage and cruelty inflicted on her in the house of her guardian and his sister,

'We, President of the Lower Court of Justice at Provins,

'Decree on the petition, and enjoin that until the family council shall have been held which, as the provisional guardian appointed by the law declares, is at once to be convened, the said minor shall not re-enter her guardian's residence, but shall be transferred to that of the guardian appointed by the law.

'And in the second place, in consideration of the minor's present state of health, and the traces of violence

which, in the opinion of the medical men, are to be seen on her person, we commission the chief physician and chief surgeon of the Hospital of Provins to attend her; and in the event of the cruelty being proved to have been constant, we reserve all the rights and powers of the law, without prejudice to the civil action taken by Auffray, the legalised temporary guardian.'

This terrible injunction was pronounced by Monsieur le Président Tiphaine with a loud voice and distinct utterance.

'Why not the hulks at once?' said Vinet. 'And all this fuss about a little girl who carried on an intrigue with a carpenter's apprentice! If this is the way the case is conducted,' he added insolently, 'we shall apply for other judgment on the plea of legitimate suspicions.'

Vinet left the Court, and went to the chief leaders of his party to explain the position of Rogron, who had never given his little cousin a finger-flip, and whom the tribunal had treated, he declared, less as Pierrette's guardian than as the chief voter in Provins.

To hear him, the Tiphaines were making much ado about nothing. The mountain would bring forth a mouse. Sylvie, an eminently religious and well-conducted person, had detected an intrigue between her brother's ward and a carpenter's boy, a Breton named Brigaut. The young rascal knew very well that the girl would have a fortune from her grandmother, and wanted to tamper with her. . . . Vinet to talk of tampering! . . . Mademoiselle Rogron, who had kept the letters in which this little slut's wickedness was made clear, was not so much to blame as the Tiphaines tried to make her seem. Even if she had been betrayed into violence to obtain a letter, which could easily be accounted for by the irritation produced in her by Breton obstinacy, in what was Rogron to blame?

The lawyer thus made the action a party matter, and contrived to give it political colour. And so, from that

evening, there were differences of opinion on the question.

'If you hear but one bell, you hear but one note,' said the wise-heads. 'Have you heard what Vinet has to say? He explains the case very well.'

Frappier's house was regarded as unsuitable for Pierrette on account of the noise, which would cause her much pain in the head. Her removal from thence to her appointed guardian's house was as desirable from a medical as from a legal point of view. This business was effected with the utmost care, and calculated to make a great sensation. Pierrette was placed on a stretcher with many mattresses, carried by two men, escorted by a Grey Sister holding in her hand a bottle of ether, followed by her grandmother, Brigaut, Madame Auffray, and her maid. The people stood at the windows and in the doors to see the little procession pass. No doubt the state in which Pierrette was seen and her death-like pallor gave immense support to the party adverse to the Rogrons. The Auffrays were bent on showing to all the town how right the President had been in pronouncing his injunction. Pierrette and her grandmother were established on the second floor of Monsieur Auffray's house. The notary and his wife lavished on them the generosity of the amplest hospitality; they made a display of it. Pierrette was nursed by her grandmother, and Monsieur Martener came to see her again the same evening, with the surgeon.

From that evening dated much exaggeration on both sides. The Rogrons' room was crowded. Vinet had worked up the Liberal faction in the matter. The two Chargebœuf ladies dined with the Rogrons, for the marriage-contract was to be signed forthwith. Vinet had had the banns put up at the Mairie that morning. He treated the business of Pierrette as a mere trifle. If the Court of Provins could not judge it dispassionately,

the superior Court would judge of the facts, said he, and the Auffrays would think twice before rushing into such an action. Then the connection between the Rogrons and the Chargebœufs was of immense weight with certain people. To them the Rogrons were as white as snow, and Pierrette an excessively wicked little girl whom they had cherished in their bosom.

In Madame Tiphaine's drawing-room vengeance was taken on the horrible scandals the Vinet party had promulgated for the last two years. The Rogrons were monsters, and the guardian would find himself in the Criminal Court. In the Square, Pierrette was perfectly well; in the upper town, she must infallibly die; at the Rogrons', she had a few scratches on her hand; at Madame Tiphaine's, she had her fingers smashed; one would have to be cut off.

Next day the *Courrier de Provins* had an extremely clever article, well written, a masterpiece of innuendo mixed up with legal demurs, which placed the Rogrons above suspicion. The *Ruche*, which came out two days later, could not reply without risk of libel; but it said that in a case like the present, the best thing was to leave justice to take its course.

The family council was constituted by the Justice of the Peace of the Provins district, as the legal President, in the first place, of Rogron and the two Auffrays, Pierrette's next-of-kin; then of Monsieur Ciprey, a nephew of Pierrette's maternal grandmother. He added to these Monsieur Habert, the young girl's director, and Colonel Gouraud, who had always given himself out to be a comrade of her father's, Colonel Lorrain. The Justice's impartiality was highly applauded in including in this family council Monsieur Habert and the Colonel, whom all the town regarded as great friends of the Rogrons. In the difficult position in which he found himself, Rogron begged to be allowed the support of Maître Vinet on the occasion. By this manœuvre,

evidently suggested by Vinet, he succeeded in postponing the meeting of the family council till the end of December.

At that date the President and his wife were in Paris, living with Madame Roguin, in consequence of the sitting of the Chambers. Thus the Ministerial party at Provins was bereft of its head. Vinet had already quietly made friends with the worthy examining judge, Monsieur Desfondrilles, in case the business should assume the penal or criminal aspect that Tiphaine had endeavoured to give it.

For three hours Vinet addressed the family council; he proved an intrigue between Brigaut and Pierrette, to justify Mademoiselle Rogron's severity; he pointed out how natural it was that the guardian should have left his ward under the control of a woman; he dwelt on his client's non-interference in the mode of Pierrette's education as conducted by Sylvie. But in spite of Vinet's efforts, the meeting unanimously decided on abolishing Rogron's guardianship. Monsieur Auffray was appointed Pierrette's guardian, and Monsieur Ciprey her legal guardian.

They heard the evidence given by Adèle the maid, who incriminated her former master and mistress; by Mademoiselle Habert, who repeated Sylvie's cruel remarks the evening when Pierrette had given herself the dreadful blow that everybody had heard, and the comments on Pierrette's health made by Madame de Chargebœuf. Brigaut produced the letter he had received from Pierrette, which established their innocence. It was proved that the deplorable state in which the minor now was resulted from the neglect of her guardian, who was responsible in all that related to his ward. Pierrette's illness had struck everybody, even persons in the town who did not know the family. Thus the charge of cruelty against Rogron was fully sustained. The matter would be made public.

By Vinet's advice Rogron put in a protest against the confirmation by the Court of the decision of the family council. The Minister of Justice now intervened, in consequence of the increasingly critical condition of Pierrette Lorrain. This singular case, though put on the lists forthwith, did not come up for trial till near the month of March 1828.

By that time the marriage of Rogron to Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf was an accomplished fact. Sylvie was living on the second floor of the house, which had been arranged to accommodate her and Madame de Chargebœuf; for the first floor was entirely given up to Madame Rogron. The beautiful Madame Rogron now succeeded to the beautiful Madame Tiphaine. The effect of this marriage was enormous. The town no longer came to Mademoiselle Sylvie's salon, but to the beautiful Madame Rogron's.

Monsieur Tiphaine, the President of the Provins Court, pushed by his mother-in-law, and supported by du Tillet and by Nucingen, the Royalist bankers, found an opportunity of being useful to the Ministry. He was one of the most highly respected speakers of the Centre, was made a judge of the Lower Court in the Seine district, and got his nephew Lesourd nominated President in his place at Provins. This appointment greatly annoyed Monsieur Desfondrilles, still an archæologist, and more supernumerary than ever. The Keeper of the Seals sent a protégé of his own to fill Lesourd's place. Thus Monsieur Tiphaine's promotion did not lead to any advancement in the legal forces at Provins.

Vinet took advantage of these circumstances very cleverly. He had always told the good folks of Provins that they were only serving as a step-ladder to Madame Tiphaine's cunning and ambition. The President laughed in his sleeve at his friends. Madame Tiphaine secretly disdained the town of Provins; she would never come back to it.

Monsieur Tiphaine *père* presently died; his son inherited the estate of le Fay, and sold his handsome house in the upper town to Monsieur Julliard. This sale showed how little he intended to come back to Provins. Vinet was right! Vinet had been a true prophet! These facts had no little influence on the action relating to Rogron's guardianship.

The horrible martyrdom so brutally inflicted on Pierrette by two imbecile tyrants—which led, medically speaking, to her being subjected by Monsieur Martener, with Bianchon's approval, to the terrible operation of trepanning; the whole dreadful drama, reduced to judicial statements, was left among the foul medley known to lawyers as outstanding cases. The action dragged on through the delays and inextricable intricacies of 'proceedings,' constantly checked by the quibbles of a contemptible lawyer, while the culumniated Pierrette languished in suffering from the most terrible pains known to medical science. We could not avoid these details as to the strange variations in public opinion and the slow march of justice, before returning to the room where she was living—where she was dying.

Monsieur Martener and the whole of the Auffray family were in a very few days completely won by Pierrette's adorable temper, and by the old Bretonne, whose feelings, ideas, and manners bore the stamp of an antique Roman type. This matron of the Marais was like one of Plutarch's women.

The doctor desired to contend with Death, at least, for his prey; for from the first the Paris and the provincial physicians had agreed in regarding Pierrette as past saving. Then began between the disease and the doctor, aided by Pierrette's youth, one of those struggles which medical men alone know; the reward, in the event of success, is neither in the pecuniary profit, nor even in the rescued sufferer; it lies in sweet satisfaction of conscience,

and in a sort of ideal and invisible palm of victory gathered by every true artist from the joyful certainty of having achieved a fine work. The physician makes for healing as the artist makes for the beautiful, urged on by a noble sentiment which we call virtue. This daily recurring battle had extinguished in this man, though a provincial, the squalid irritation of the warfare going on between the Vinet party and that of the Tiphaines, as happens with men who have to fight it out with great suffering.

Monsieur Martener had at first wished to practise his profession in Paris; but the activity of the great city, the callousness produced at last in a doctor's mind by the terrific number of sick people and the multitude of serious cases, had appalled his gentle soul, which was made for a country life. He was in bondage, too, to his pretty birthplace. So he had come back to Provins to marry and settle there, and take almost tender care of a population he could think of as a large family. All the time Pierrette was ill he could not bear to speak of her illness. His aversion to reply when every one asked for news of the poor child was so evident, that at last nobody questioned him about her. Pierrette was to him what she could not help being—one of those deep, mysterious poems, immense in its misery, such as occur in the terrible life of a physician. He had for this frail girl an admiration of which he would betray the secret to no one.

This feeling for his patient was infectious, as all true sentiments are; Monsieur and Madame Auffray's house, so long as Pierrette lived in it, was peaceful and still. Even the children, who of old had had such famous games with Pierrette, understood, with childlike grace, that they were not to be noisy or troublesome. They made it a point of honour to be good because Pierrette was ill.

Monsieur Auffray's house is in the upper town, below the ruined castle; built, indeed, on one of the cliff-like knolls formed by the overthrow of the old ramparts.

From thence the residents have a view over the valley as they walk in a little orchard supported by the thick walls rising straight up from the lower town. The roofs of the houses rise to the level of the wall that upholds this garden. Along this terrace is a walk ending at the glass-door of Monsieur Auffray's study. At the other end are a vine-covered arbour and a fig-tree, sheltering a round table, a bench, and some chairs, all painted green.

Pierrette had a room over that of her new guardian. Madame Lorrain slept there on a camp-bed by her grandchild's side. From her window Pierrette could see the beautiful valley of Provins, which she hardly knew—she had so rarely been out of the Rogrons' sinister dwelling. Whenever it was fine, she liked to drag herself, on her grandmother's arm, as far as this arbour. Brigaut, who now did no work, came three times a day to see his little friend; he was absorbed in grief, which made him indifferent to life; he watched for Monsieur Martener with the eagerness of a spaniel, always went in with him and came out with him.

It would be difficult to imagine all the follies every one was ready to commit for the dear little invalid. Her grandmother, drunk with grief, hid her despair; she showed the child the same smiling face as at Pen-Hoël. In her wish to delude herself, she made her a Breton cap such as Pierrette had worn when she came to Provins, and put it on her; the girl then looked to her more like herself; she was sweet to behold, with her face framed in the aureole of cambric edged with starched lace. Her face, as white as fine white porcelain, her forehead on which suffering set a semblance of deep thoughtfulness, the purity of outline refined by sickness, the slowness and occasional fixity of her gaze, all made Pierrette a master-work of melancholy.

The child was waited on with fanatical devotion; she was so tender, so loving. Madame Martener had sent her piano to Madame Auffray, her sister, thinking it

might amuse Pierrette, to whom music was rapture. It was a poem to watch her listening to a piece by Weber, Beethoven, or Hérold, her eyes raised to heaven in silence, regretting, no doubt, the life she felt slipping from her. Monsieur Péroux the curé and Monsieur Habert, her two priestly comforters, admired her pious resignation.

Is it not a strange fact, worthy of the attention alike of philosophers and of mere observers, that a sort of seraphic perfection is characteristic of youths and maidens marked amid the crowd with the red cross of death, like saplings in a forest? He who has witnessed such a death can never remain or become an infidel. These beings exhale, as it were, a heavenly fragrance, their looks speak of God, their voice is eloquent in the most trivial speech, and often sounds like a divine instrument, expressing the secrets of futurity. When Monsieur Martener congratulated Pierrette on having carried out some disagreeable prescription, this angel would say in the presence of all, and with what a look!—

'I wish to live, dear Monsieur Martener, less for my own sake than for my grandmother's, for my poor Brigaut's, and for you all, who will be sorry when I die.'

The first time she took a walk, in the month of November, under a bright Martinmas sun, escorted by all the family, Madame Auffray asked her if she were tired.

'Now that I have nothing to bear but the pain God sends me, I can endure it. I find strength to bear suffering in the joy of being loved.'

This was the only time she ever alluded, even so remotely, to her horrible martyrdom at the Rogrons'; she never spoke of them; and as the remembrance could not fail to be painful, no one mentioned their name.

'Dear Madame Auffray,' said she one day at noon on the terrace, while gazing at the valley lighted up by brilliant sunshine and dressed in the russet tints of

autumn, 'my dying days in your house will have brought me more happiness than all the three years before.'

Madame Auffray looked at her sister, Madame Martener, and said to her in a whisper—

'How she would have loved!'

And, indeed, Pierrette's tone and look gave her words unutterable meaning.

Monsieur Martener kept up a correspondence with Doctor Bianchon, and tried no serious treatment without his approbation. He hoped first to restore the girl to normal health, and then to enable the abscess to discharge itself through the ear. The more acute her pain was, the more hopeful he felt. With regard to the first point he had some success, and that was a great triumph. For some days Pierrette recovered her appetite, and could satisfy it with substantial food, for which her unhealthy state had hitherto given her great aversion; her colour improved, but the pain in her head was terrible. The doctor now begged the great physician, his consultee, to come to Provins. Bianchon came, stayed two days, and advised an operation; he threw himself into all poor Martener's anxiety, and went himself to fetch the famous Desplein. So the operation was performed by the greatest surgeon of ancient or modern times; but this terrible augur said to Martener as he went away with Bianchon, his best-beloved pupil—

'You can save her only by a miracle. As Horace has told you, necrosis has set in. At that age the bones are still so tender.'

The operation was performed early in March 1828. All that month Monsieur Martener, alarmed by the fearful torments Pierrette endured, made several journeys to Paris; he consulted Desplein and Bianchon, to whom he even suggested a treatment resembling that known as lithotrity—the insertion of a tubular instrument into the skull, by which a heroic remedy might be introduced to arrest the progress of decay. The daring Desplein dared

not attempt this surgical feat, which only despair had suggested to Martener.

When the doctor returned from his last journey to Paris, his friends thought him crestfallen and gloomy. One fatal evening he was compelled to announce to the Auffray family, to Madame Lorrain, to the confessor, and to Brigaut, who were all present, that science could do no more for Pierrette, that her life was in the hands of God alone. Her grandmother took a vow and begged the curé to say, every morning at daybreak, before Pierrette rose, a mass which she and Brigaut would attend.

The case came up for trial. While the Rogrons' victim lay dying, Vinet was calumniating her to the Court. The Court ratified the decision of the family council, and the lawyer immediately appealed. The newly appointed public prosecutor delivered an address which led to an inquiry. Rogron and his sister were obliged to find sureties to avoid being sent to prison. The inquiry necessitated the examination of Pierrette herself. When Monsieur Desfondrilles went to the Auffrays' house, Pierrette was actually dying; the priest was at her bedside, and she was about to take the last sacrament. At that moment she was entreating all the assembled family to forgive her cousins as she herself forgave them, saying, with excellent good sense, that judgment in such cases belonged to God alone.

'Grandmother,' said she, 'leave all you possess to Brigaut'—Brigaut melted into tears—'and,' Pierrette went on, 'give a thousand francs to good Adèle, who used to warm my bed on the sly. If she had stayed with my cousins, I should be alive . . .'

It was at three o'clock on Easter Tuesday, on a beautiful day, that this little angel ceased to suffer. Her heroical grandmother insisted on sitting by her all night with the priests, and sewing her winding-sheet on her with her old hands. Towards evening Brigaut left the house and went back to Frappier's.

'I need not ask you the news, my poor boy,' said the carpenter.

'Père Frappier—yes; it is all over with her, and not with me!'

The apprentice looked round the workshop at all the wood store with gloomy but keen eyes.

'I understand, Brigaut,' said the worthy Frappier. 'There—that is what you want,' and he pointed to some two-inch oak planks.

'Do not help me, Monsieur Frappier,' said the Breton. 'I will do it all myself.'

Brigaut spent the night in planing and joining Pierrette's coffin, and more than once he ripped off with one stroke a long shaving wet with his tears. His friend Frappier smoked and watched him. He said nothing to him but these few words when his man put the four sides together—

'Make the lid to slide in a groove, then her poor friends will not hear you nail it down.'

At daybreak Brigaut went for lead to line the coffin. By a singular coincidence the sheets of lead cost exactly the sum he had given to Pierrette for her journey from Nantes to Provins. The brave Breton, who had borne up under the dreadful pain of making a coffin for the beloved companion of his childhood, overlaying each funereal board with all his memories, could not endure this coincidence; he turned faint, and could not carry the lead; the plumber accompanied him, and offered to go with him and solder down the top sheet as soon as the body should be laid in the coffin.

The Breton burned his plane and all the tools he had used for the work, he wound up his accounts with Frappier, and bade him good-bye.

The heroism which enabled the poor fellow, like the grandmother, to busy himself with doing the last services to the dead, led to his intervening in the crowning scene which put a climax to the Rogrons' tyranny.

Brigaut and the plumber arrived at Monsieur Auffray's just in time to decide by brute force a horrible and shameful legal question. The chamber of the dead was full of people, and presented a strange scene to the two workmen. The Rogrons stood hideous by the victim's corpse to torture it even in death. The body of the poor girl, sublime in its beauty, lay on her grandmother's camp-bed. Pierrette's eyes were closed, her hair smoothly braided, her body sewn into a winding-sheet of coarse cotton.

By this bed, her hair in disorder, on her knees with outstretched hands and a flaming face, old Madame Lorrain was crying out—

'No, no; it shall never be!'

At the foot of the bed were the guardian Monsieur Auffray, the Curé Monsieur Péroux, and Monsieur Habert. Tapers were still burning. Opposite the grandmother stood the hospital surgeon and Monsieur Néraud, supported by the smooth-tongued and formidable Vinet. A registrar was present. The surgeon had on his dissecting apron; one of his assistants had opened his roll of instruments and was handing him a scalpel.

This scene was disturbed by the noise made by the fall of the coffin, which Brigaut and the plumber dropped; and by Brigaut himself, who, entering first, was seized with horror on seeing old Madame Lorrain in tears.

'What is the matter?' asked Brigaut, placing himself by her side, and convulsively clutching a chisel he had brought with him.

'The matter!' said the old woman. 'They want to open my child's body, to split her skull—to rend her heart after her death as they did in her lifetime!'

'Who?' said Brigaut, in a voice to crack the drum of the lawyer's ears.

'The Rogrons.'

'By the God above us!——'

'One moment, Brigaut,' said Monsieur Auffray, seeing the Breton brandish his chisel.

'Monsieur Auffray,' said Brigaut, as pale as the dead girl, 'I listen to you because you are Monsieur Auffray. But at this moment I would not listen to——'

'Justice!' Auffray put in.

'Is there such a thing as Justice?' cried Brigaut.

'That—that is Justice!' he went on, threatening the lawyer, the surgeon, and the clerk with his chisel that flashed in the sunlight.

'My good fellow,' said the curé, 'Monsieur Rogron's lawyer has appealed to Justice. His client lies under a serious accusation, and it is impossible to refuse a suspected person the means of clearing himself. According to Monsieur Rogron's advocate, if this poor child died of the abscess on the brain, her former guardian must be regarded as guiltless; for it is proved that Pierrette for a long time concealed the blow she had given herself——'

'That will do!' said Brigaut.

'My client——' Vinet began.

'Your client,' cried the Breton, 'shall go to hell, and I to the scaffold; for if one of you makes an attempt to touch her whom your client killed—if that sawbones does not put his knife away, I will strike him dead.'

'This is overt resistance,' said Vinet; 'we shall lay it before the Court.'

The five strangers withdrew.

'Oh, my son!' said the old woman, starting up and throwing her arms round Brigaut's neck, 'let us bury her at once; they will come back.'

'When once the lead is soldered,' said the plumber, 'perhaps they will not dare.'

Monsieur Auffray hurried off to his brother-in-law, Monsieur Lesourd, to try to get this matter settled. Vinet wished for nothing better. Pierrette once dead, the action as to the guardianship, which was not yet decided, must die a natural death, without any possibility of

argument either for or against the Rogrons; the question remained an open one. So the shrewd lawyer had perfectly foreseen the effect his demand would produce.

At noon Monsieur Desfondrilles reported to the Bench on the inquiry relating to the Rogrons, and the Court pronounced a verdict of no case, on self-evident grounds.

Rogron dared not show his face at Pierrette's funeral, though all the town was present. Vinet tried to drag him there; but the ex-haberdasher feared the excitement of universal reprobation.

Brigaut, after seeing the grave filled up in which Pierrette was laid, left Provins and went on foot to Paris. He addressed a petition to the Dauphiness to be allowed, in consideration of his father's name, to enlist in the Royal Guard, and was soon afterwards enrolled. When an expedition was fitted out for Algiers, he again wrote to the Dauphiness, begging to be ordered on active service. He was then sergeant; Marshal Bourmont made him sub-lieutenant of the Line. The Major's son behaved like a man seeking death. But death has hitherto respected Jacques Brigaut, who has distinguished himself in all the recent expeditions without being once wounded. He is now at the head of a battalion in the Line. There is not a more taciturn or a better officer. Off duty he is speechless, walks alone, and lives like a machine. Every one understands and respects some secret sorrow. He has forty-six thousand francs, left him by old Madame Lorrain, who died in Paris in 1829.

Vinet was elected député in 1830, and the services he has done to the new Government have earned him the place of Prosecutor-General. His influence is now so great that he will always be returned as député. Rogron is Receiver-General in the town where Vinet exercises his high functions, and by a singular coincidence Monsieur Tiphaine is the chief President of the Supreme Court there; for the Judge unhesitatingly attached himself to

the new dynasty of July. The ex-beautiful Madame Tiphaine lives on very good terms with the beautiful Madame Rogron. Vinet and President Tiphaine agree perfectly.

As to Rogron, utterly stupid, he says such things as this—

'Louis Philippe will never be really King till he can create nobles.'

This speech is obviously not his own.

His failing health allows Madame Rogron to hope that ere long she may be free to marry General the Marquis de Montriveau, a peer of France, who is Governor of the department, and attentive to her. Vinet is always in a hurry to condemn a man to death; he never believes in the innocence of the accused. This man, born to be a public prosecutor, is considered one of the most amiable men of his district, and is not less successful in Paris and in the Chamber; at Court he is the exquisite courtier.

General Baron Gouraud, that noble relic of our glorious armies, has married—as Vinet promised that he should—a Demoiselle Matifat, five-and-twenty years of age, the daughter of a druggist in the Rue des Lombards, who had a fortune of fifty thousand crowns. He is Governor—as Vinet prophesied—of a department close to Paris. He was made a peer of France as the reward of his conduct in the riots under Casimir Périer's Ministry. Baron Gouraud was one of the generals who took the Church of Saint-Merry, delighted to 'rap the knuckles' of the civilians who had bullied them for fifteen years; and his zeal won him the Grand Cordon of the Legion of Honour.

None of those who were implicated in Pierrette's death have any remorse. Monsieur Desfondrilles is still an archæologist; but, to promote his own election, Attorney-General Vinet took care to have him appointed President of the Court. Sylvie holds a little court, and manages

her brother's affairs; she lends at high interest, and does not spend more than twelve hundred francs a year.

From time to time, in the little Square, when some son of Provins comes home from Paris to settle there, and is seen coming out of Mademoiselle Rogron's house, some former partisan of the Tiphaines will say, 'The Rogrons had a very sad affair once about a ward . . .'

'A mere party question,' President Desfondrilles replies. 'Monstrous tales were given out. Out of kindness of heart they took this little Pierrette to live with them, a nice child enough, without a penny; just as she was growing up she had some intrigue with a joiner's apprentice, and would come to her window barefoot to talk to the lad, who used to stand just there, do you see? The lovers sent each other notes by means of a string. As you may suppose, in her state, and in the months of October and November, that was quite enough to upset a little pale-faced girl. The Rogrons behaved admirably; they never claimed their share of the child's inheritance; they gave everything to the grandmother. The moral of it all, my friends, is that the devil always punishes us for a good action.'

'Oh! this is quite another story; old Frappier told it in a very different way!'

'Old Frappier consults his cellar more than his memory,' remarked a frequenter of Mademoiselle Rogron's drawing-room.

'But then old Monsieur Habert——'

'Oh! you know about his share in the matter?'

'No.'

'Why, he wanted to get his sister married to Monsieur Rogron, the Receiver-General.'

Two men daily think of Pierrette—Doctor Martener and Major Brigaut, who alone know the terrible truth.

To give that truth immense proportions, it is enough to recall the fact that if we change the scene to the Middle

Ages, and to the vast theatre of Rome, a sublime girl, Beatrice Cenci, was dragged to the scaffold for reasons and by intrigues almost the same as those which brought Pierrette to the tomb. Beatrice Cenci found none to defend her but an artist—a painter. And to-day history and living people, on the evidence of Guido Reni's portrait, condemn the Pope, and regard Beatrice as one of the most pathetic victims of infamous passions and factions.

And we may agree that the law would be a fine thing for social roguery, if there were no God.

November 1830.

THE ABBÉ BIROTTEAU

To DAVID, Sculptor.

The duration of the work on which I write your name—doubly illustrious in our age—is most uncertain, while you inscribe mine on bronze, which outlives nations even when stamped only by the vulgar die of the coiner. Will not numismatists be puzzled by the many crowned heads in your studio, when they find among the ashes of Paris these lives, prolonged by you beyond the life of nations, in which they will fancy they discover dynasties? Yours is this divine prerogative—mine be the gratitude. *De Balzac.*

In the early autumn of 1826 the Abbé Birotteau, the principal personage of this story, was caught in a shower on his way home from the house where he had spent the evening. He was just crossing, as fast as his burly weight permitted, a little deserted square known as the Close, lying behind the apse of Saint-Gatien at Tours.

The Abbé Birotteau, a short man of apoplectic build, and now sixty years of age, had already had several attacks of gout. Hence, of all the minor miseries of human life, that which the worthy man held in most horror was the sudden wetting of his shoes with their large silver buckles, and the immersion of their soles. In fact, notwithstanding the flannel lining in which he packed his feet in all weathers, with the care a priest

always takes of himself, they often got a little damp; then, next day, the gout unfailingly gave him proof of its constancy.

However, as the cobbles in the Close are always dry, and as the Abbé had won three francs and ten sous at whist from Madame de Listomère, he submitted to the rain with resignation from the middle of the Place de l'Archevêché, where it had begun to fall heavily. Moreover, at this moment he was brooding over his chimera, a longing already twelve years old, a priest's day-dream! A dream which, recurring every evening, now seemed likely to find fulfilment; in short, he was too well wrapped in the fur sleeves of a canon's robes to be sensitive to the severities of the weather. In the course of this evening the accustomed guests who met at Madame de Listomère's had as good as promised him a nomination to the canon's stall at present vacant in the Metropolitan Chapter of Saint-Gatien, by proving to him that no one better deserved it than he, whose claims were indisputable, though so long ignored. If he had lost at cards, if he had heard that the canonry was given to the Abbé Poirel, his rival, the good man would have found the rain very cold; he might have abused life. But he was in one of those rare moments when delightful sensations make us forget everything. Though he hastened his pace, it was in obedience to a mechanical impulse, and truth—so indispensable in a tale of domestic life—requires us to say that he was thinking neither of the shower nor of the gout.

There were formerly round this Close, on the side by the Grand' Rue, a number of houses standing within a wall, and belonging to the Cathedral, inhabited by certain dignitaries of the Chapter. Since the sequestration of ecclesiastical property, the town has taken the alley dividing these houses as a public way, by the name of Rue de la Psalette, leading from the Close to the

High Street. The name itself shows that here formerly dwelt the precentor with his schools and those who were within his jurisdiction. The left side of the street is formed of one large house, its garden walls being bridged by the flying buttresses of Saint-Gatien, which spring from the ground of its strip of garden, making it doubtful whether the Cathedral were built before or after that ancient dwelling. But by examining the mouldings and the shape of the windows, the arch of the doorway, and the external architecture of the house, darkened by time, an archæologist detects that it had always been part and parcel of the magnificent church to which it is wedded. An antiquarian—if there were one at Tours, one of the least literary towns of France—might even discern at the entrance to the passage from the Close some traces of the covered archway which of old served as an entry to these priestly dwellings, and which must have harmonised in character with the main edifice.

This house, being to the north of Saint-Gatien, lies always in the shadow of this vast Cathedral, on which time has cast its gloomy mantle, stamped wrinkles, and set its damp chill, its mosses, and straggling weeds. And it is perennially wrapped in the deepest silence, broken only by the tolling of the bells, the chanted service heard through the Cathedral walls, or the cawing of jackdaws nesting at the top of the belfries. The spot is a desert of masonry, a solitude full of individuality, in which none could dwell but beings absolutely mindless, or gifted with immense strength of soul.

The house in question had always been the home of Abbés, and belonged to an old maid named Mademoiselle Gamard. Although during the Terror the property had been bought from the nation by Mademoiselle Gamard's father, as the worthy maiden had for twenty years past let the rooms to priests, no one, at the Restoration, could take it ill that a bigot should not surrender a piece

of national property; religious persons may have supposed that she meant to bequeath it to the Chapter, and the worldly saw no change in its uses.

It was to this house, then, that the Abbé Birotteau was making his way; he had lived in it for two years. His rooms there had been till then, as the canonry was now, the object of his desires, and his *hoc erat in votis* for a dozen years before. To board with Mademoiselle Gamard and to be made a canon were the two great aims of his life; and perhaps they completely sum up the ambitions of a priest who, regarding himself as a pilgrim to eternity, can in this world wish for no more than a good room, a good table, clean clothes, shoes with silver buckles—all-sufficient for his animal needs—and a canonry to satisfy his pride, the indefinable feeling which will accompany us, no doubt, into the presence of God, since there are grades of rank among the saints.

But the Abbé Birotteau's desire for the rooms he now occupied, so trivial a feeling in the eyes of the worldly wise, had been to him a perfect passion, a passion full of obstacles, and, like the most criminal passions, full of hopes, joys, and remorse.

The arrangements and space in her house did not allow Mademoiselle Gamard to take more than two resident boarders. Now, about twelve years before the day when Birotteau went to lodge with this maiden lady, she had undertaken to preserve in health and contentment Monsieur l'Abbé Troubert and Monsieur l'Abbé Chapeloud. The Abbé Troubert still lived, the Abbé Chapeloud was dead, and Birotteau had been his immediate successor.

The late Abbé Chapeloud, in his lifetime Canon of Saint-Gatien, had been the Abbé Birotteau's intimate friend. Every time the priest had gone into the canon's rooms he had unfailingly admired them, the furniture, and the books. This admiration one day gave birth to a desire to possess these fine things. The Abbé

Birotteau had found it impossible to smother this desire, which often made him dreadfully unhappy when he reflected that only the death of his best friend could satisfy this hidden covetousness, which nevertheless constantly increased.

The Abbé Chapeloud and his friend Birotteau were not rich. Both sons of peasants, they had nothing but the poor emolument doled out to priests, and their small savings had been spent in tiding over the evil days of the Revolution. When Napoleon re-established Catholic worship, the Abbé Chapeloud was made canon of Saint-Gatien, and the Abbé Birotteau became *vicaire*, or mass-priest, of the Cathedral. It was then that Chapeloud went to board with Mademoiselle Gamard. When Birotteau first called on the canon in his new residence, he thought the rooms delightfully arranged, but that was all. The beginnings of this concupiscence for furniture were like those of a real passion in a young man, which often at first is no more than cold admiration of the woman he subsequently loves for ever.

These rooms, reached by a stone staircase, were on the side of the house looking south. The Abbé Troubert inhabited the ground floor, and Mademoiselle Gamard the first floor of the main front to the street. When Chapeloud went in, the rooms were bare and the ceilings blackened by smoke. The chimney fronts, clumsily carved in stone, had never been painted. All the furniture the poor canon could at first put in consisted of a bed, a table, some chairs, and his few books. The apartment was like a fine woman in rags.

But two or three years later, an old lady having left the Abbé Chapeloud two thousand francs, he laid out the money in the purchase of an oak bookcase, saved from the destruction of an old château pulled down by the *Bande noire* (a company who bought old buildings to demolish), and remarkable for carvings worthy of the admiration of artists. The Abbé made the purchase,

fascinated less by its cheapness than by its exact correspondence in size with the dimensions of his corridor. His savings then allowed him completely to restore this corridor, until now abandoned to neglect. The floor was carefully waxed, the ceiling white-washed, the woodwork painted and grained to imitate the tone and knots of oak. A marble chimney-shelf replaced the old one. The Canon had taste enough to hunt up and find some old armchairs of carved walnut wood. Then a long ebony table and two little Boulle cabinets gave this library a finish full of character.

Within two years, the liberality of various devout persons, and the bequests of pious penitents, though small, had filled the shelves of the bookcase hitherto vacant. Finally, an uncle of Chapeloud's, an old Oratorian, left him his collection in folio of the *Fathers of the Church*, and several other large works of value to an ecclesiastic.

Birotteau, more and more surprised by the successive transformations in this formerly bare corridor, by degrees became involuntarily covetous. He longed to possess this study, so perfectly adapted to the gravity of priestly habits. This passion grew day by day. Spending whole days, as he often did, in working in this snuggery, he could appreciate the silence and peace of it, after having at first admired its comfortable arrangement. For the next few years the Abbé Chapeloud used this retreat as an oratory which his lady friends delighted to embellish. Later, again, a lady presented to the Canon a piece of furniture in worsted work for his bedroom, at which she had long been stitching under the amiable priest's eyes without his suspecting its purpose. Then Birotteau was as much dazzled by the bedroom as by the library.

Finally, three years before his death, the Abbé Chapeloud had completed the comfort of his rooms by decorating the drawing-room. Though simply furnished

with red Utrecht velvet, this had been too much for Birotteau. From the day when the Canon's friend first saw the red silk curtains, the mahogany furniture, the Aubusson carpet that graced this large room, freshly painted, Chapeloud's apartment became to him the object of a secret monomania. To live there, to sleep in the great bed with silk curtains in which the Canon slept, and have all his comforts about him as Chapeloud had, seemed to Birotteau perfect happiness; he looked for nothing beyond. Every feeling which envy and ambition arouse in the souls of other men, was, in that of the Abbé Birotteau, centred in the deep and secret longing with which he wished for a home like that created for himself by the Abbé Chapeloud. When his friend fell ill, it was no doubt sincere affection that brought Birotteau to see him; but on first hearing of the Canon's sickness, and while sitting with him, there rose from the depths of his soul a thousand thoughts, of which the simplest formula was always this, 'If Chapeloud dies, I can have his rooms.' Still, as Birotteau had a good heart, strict principles, and a narrow intellect, he never went so far as to conceive of means for getting his friend to leave him his library and furniture.

The Abbé Chapeloud, an amiable and indulgent egoist, guessed his friend's mania—which it was not difficult to do, and forgave it—which for a priest would seem less easy. Still, Birotteau, whose friendship remained unaltered, never ceased to walk day after day with the Canon up and down the same path in the Mall at Tours without curtailing by a single minute the time devoted to this exercise for the last twenty years. Birotteau thought of his involuntary wishes as sins, and would have been capable, in sheer contrition, of the utmost devotion for Chapeloud's sake.

The Canon paid his debt to this sincere and artless brotherliness by saying, a few days before his death, to

the priest, who was reading to him from the *Quotidienne*, 'You will get the rooms this time. I feel that it is all over with me.'

In fact, by his will, the Abbé Chapeloud left his library and furniture to Birotteau. The possession of these much-longed-for things, and the prospect of being taken as a boarder by Mademoiselle Gamard, greatly softened Birotteau's grief at the loss of his friend the Canon. He would not perhaps have called him to life again, but he wept for him. For several days he was like Gargantua, whose wife died in giving birth to Pantagruel, and who knew not whether to rejoice over his son's birth or to lament at having buried his good Badebec, and made the mistake of rejoicing at his wife's death and deploring the birth of Pantagruel.

The Abbé Birotteau spent the first days of his grief in verifying the volumes of *his* library, and enjoying the use of *his* furniture, examining them, and saying in a tone, which, unfortunately, could not be recorded, 'Poor Chapeloud!' In short, his joy and his grief were so absorbing that he felt no distress at seeing the canonry bestowed on another, though the lamented Chapeloud had always hoped that Birotteau might be his successor. Mademoiselle Gamard received the Abbé with pleasure as a boarder, and he thus enjoyed thenceforth all the delights of material existence that the deceased Canon had so highly praised.

Incalculable advantages! For, to hear the late departed Canon Chapeloud, not one of the priests who dwelt in the town of Tours, not even the Archbishop himself, could be the object of care so delicate or so precise as that lavished by Mademoiselle Gamard on her two boarders. The first words spoken by the Canon to his friend as they walked in the Mall had almost always referred to the excellent dinner he had just eaten; and it was a rare thing if, in the course of the seven walks they took in the week, he did not happen to say at least four-

teen times, 'That good woman has certainly a vocation for taking charge of the priesthood.'

'Only think,' said the Canon to Birotteau, 'for twelve successive years clean linen, albs, surplices, bands—nothing has ever been missing. I always find everything in its place and in sufficient numbers, all smelling of orris-root. My furniture is constantly polished, and so well wiped that for a long time past I have not known what dust means. Did you ever see a speck in my rooms? Then the fire-logs are well chosen, the smallest things are all good; in short, it is as if Mademoiselle Gamard always had an eye on my room. I cannot recollect in ten years ever having had to ring twice for anything whatever. That I call living! never to have to look for a thing, not even for one's slippers; always to find a good fire and a good table. Once my bellows put me out, the nozzle had got burnt; I had not to complain twice. The very next day Mademoiselle had bought me a nice pair of bellows and the pair of tongs you see me use to put the fire together.'

Birotteau's only reply was, 'Smelling of orris-root!' That smelling of orris-root always struck him. The Canon's words painted a really ideal state of happiness to the poor priest whose bands and albs nearly turned his brain; for he had no sense of order, and not unfrequently forgot to bespeak his dinner. And so, whenever he caught sight of Mademoiselle Gamard at Saint-Gatien, either while going round for the offertory or while reading mass, he never failed to give her a gentle and kindly glance such as Saint Theresa may have raised to heaven.

Though the comfort which every creature desires, and of which he had so often dreamed, had now fallen to his lot, as it is difficult for any man, even for a priest, to live without a hobby, for the last eighteen months the Abbé Birotteau had substituted for his two gratified

passions a craving for a canonry. The title of canon had become to him what that of a peer must be to a plebeian minister. And the probability of a nomination, the hopes he had just been encouraged in at Madame de Listomère's, had so effectually turned his brain that it was only on reaching home that he discovered that he had left his umbrella at her house. Perhaps, indeed, but for the rain that fell in torrents, he would not have remembered it then, so completely was he absorbed in repeating to himself all that had been said on the subject of his preferment by the members of the party at Madame de Listomère's—an old lady with whom he spent every Wednesday evening.

The Abbé rang sharply as a hint to the maid not to keep him waiting. Then he shrank into the corner by the door so as to be splashed as little as possible; but the water from the roof ran off precisely on the toes of his shoes, and the gusts of wind blew on to him squalls of rain not unlike a repeated shower bath. After calculating the time necessary for coming from the kitchen to pull the latch-string under the door, he rang again, a very significant peal. 'They cannot have gone out,' thought he, hearing not a sound within. And for the third time he rang, again and again, a peal that sounded so sharply through the house, and was so loudly repeated by every echo in the Cathedral, that it was impossible not to be roused by this assertive jangle. And a few moments after it was not without satisfaction, mingled with annoyance, that he heard the maid's wooden shoes clattering over the pebbly stone floor. Still, the gouty priest's troubles were not over so soon as he thought. Instead of pulling the latch, Marianne was obliged to unlock the door with the huge key, and draw back the bolts.

'How can you leave me to ring three times in such weather?' said he to Marianne.

'Why, sir, as you see, the house was locked up. Every-

body has been in bed a long time; it has struck a quarter to ten. Mademoiselle must have thought you had not gone out.'

'But you yourself saw me go out. Besides, Mademoiselle knows very well that I go to Madame de Listomère's every Wednesday.'

'Well, sir, I only did as Mademoiselle told me,' replied Marianne, locking the door again.

These words were a blow to the Abbé, which he felt all the more keenly for the intense bliss of his day-dream. He said nothing, but followed Marianne to the kitchen, to fetch his bedroom candle, which he supposed would have been brought down there. But instead of going to the kitchen, Marianne lighted the Abbé up to his rooms, where he found the candlestick on a table outside the door of the red drawing-room, in a sort of anteroom, formed of the stair-landing, which the Canon had shut in for the purpose by a large glass partition. Dumb with surprise, he hurried into his bedroom, found no fire on the hearth, and called Marianne, who had not yet had time to go downstairs.

'You have not lighted my fire?' said he.

'I beg your pardon, sir; it must have gone out again.'

Birotteau looked again at the hearth, and saw plainly that the ashes had been piled there since the morning.

'I want to dry my feet,' he went on; 'make up the fire.'

Marianne obeyed with the haste of a woman who wants to go to sleep. While the Abbé himself hunted for his slippers, failing to see them in the middle of his bed-rug, as usual, he made certain observations as to the way Marianne was dressed, which proved to a demonstration that she had not just got out of bed, as she had asserted. And he then remembered that for about a fortnight past he had been weaned from all the little attentions that had made life so endurable for the last eighteen

months. Now, as it is in the nature of narrow minds to argue from minute things, he at once gave himself up to deep reflections on these four incidents, imperceptible to anybody else, but to him nothing less than four catastrophes. The oversight as to his slippers, Marianne's falsehood with regard to the fire, the unaccustomed removal of his candlestick to the table in the anteroom, and the long waiting so ingeniously inflicted on him, on the threshold in the rain, were ominous of a complete wreck of his happiness.

When the fire was blazing on the dogs, when his night-lamp was lighted, and Marianne had left him without inquiring as usual, 'Does Monsieur need anything further?' the Abbé sank gently into his departed friend's roomy and handsome easy-chair; still, his action as he dropped into it was somewhat melancholy. The worthy man was oppressed by the presentiment of terrible disaster. His eyes fell in succession on the handsome timepiece, the chest of drawers, the chairs, curtains, and rugs, the four-post bed, the holy-water shell and the crucifix, on a Virgin by le Valentin, on a Christ by Lebrun—in short, on all the details of the room; the expression of his face betrayed the pangs of the tenderest farewell that a lover ever looked at his first mistress, or an old man at his latest plantation. The Abbé had just detected—a little late, it is true—the symptoms of a covert persecution to which he had for about three months been subjected by Mademoiselle Gamard, whose ill-will would no doubt have been suspected sooner by a man of keener intelligence.

Have not all old maids a certain talent for emphasising the acts and words suggested to them by hatred? They scratch as cats do. And not only do they hurt, but they take pleasure in hurting, and in making their victim see that they can hurt. While a man of the world would not have allowed himself to be clawed a second time, the worthy Birotteau had taken several

scratches in the face before he had conceived of malignant purpose.

Immediately, with the inquisitioral shrewdness acquired by priests, accustomed as they are to direct consciences and to investigate trifles from the shades of the confessional, the Abbé Birotteau set to work to formulate the following proposition—as though it were the basis of a religious controversy.—Granting that Mademoiselle Gamard may have forgotten Madame de Listomère's evening—that Marianne had neglected to light my fire—that they thought I was at home; as it is certain that I, *myself*, must have taken my candlestick downstairs this morning!!!—it is impossible that Mademoiselle Gamard, seeing it in her sitting-room, could have supposed I had gone to bed. *Ergo*, Mademoiselle Gamard left me at the door in the rain on purpose; and by having the candlestick carried up to my rooms she meant me to know it.—'What does it mean?' he said aloud, carried away by the gravity of the case, as he rose to take off his wet clothes, and put on his dressing-gown and his nightcap. Then he went from the bed to the fire gesticulating and jerking out such comments as these, in various tones of voice, all ended in a falsetto pitch as though to represent points of interrogation.

'What the deuce have I done? Why does she owe me a grudge?—Marianne cannot have forgotten my fire; Mademoiselle must have told her not to light it! I should be childish not to see from the tone and manner she assumes towards me that I have been so unfortunate as to displease her.—Nothing of the kind ever happened to Chapeloud!—It will be impossible for me to live in the midst of the annoyances that . . . At my age too!'

He went to bed, hoping to clear up on the morrow the cause of the hatred which was destroying for ever the happiness he had enjoyed for two years after wishing for it so long. Alas! the secret motives of Mademoiselle

Gamard's feeling against him were destined to remain for ever unknown to him ; not because they were difficult to guess, but because the poor man had not the simple candour which enables great minds and thorough scoundrels to recognise and judge themselves. Only a man of genius or a master of intrigue ever says to himself, 'I was to blame.' Interest and talent are the only conscientious and lucid counsellors.

Now, the Abbé Birotteau, whose kindliness went to the pitch of silliness, whose knowledge was a sort of veneer laid on by patient work, who had no experience whatever of the world and its ways, and who lived between the altar and the confessional, chiefly engaged in deciding trivial cases of conscience in his capacity of confessor to the schools of the town and to some noble souls who appreciated him—the Abbé Birotteau was, in short, to be regarded as a big baby to whom the greater part of social customs were absolutely unknown. At the same time, the selfishness natural to all human beings, reinforced by the egoism peculiar to a priest, and by that of the narrow life of a provincial town, had insensibly grown strong in him without his suspecting it. If any one had taken enough interest in searching the good man's soul to show him that, in the infinitely small details of his existence and the trivial duties of his private life, he failed essentially in the self-sacrifice he professed, he would have punished and mortified himself in all sincerity.

But those whom we offend, even unwittingly, reck not of our innocence ; they desire and achieve revenge. Thus Birotteau, weak as he was, was doomed to suffer under the hand of that great distributive Justice which always trusts the world to carry out its sentences, known to many simpletons as the misfortunes of life.

There was this difference between Canon Chapeloud and the Abbé : one was a witty and ingenious egoist, the other an honest and clumsy one. When Monsieur

Chapeloud had come to board with Mademoiselle Gamard, he could perfectly well gauge his landlady's character. The confessional had enlightened him as to the bitterness infused into an old maid's heart by the misfortune of finding herself outside society; his behaviour to Mademoiselle Gamard was shrewdly calculated. The lady being no more than eight-and-thirty, still had those little pretensions which, in such discreet persons, turn in later years into a high opinion of themselves.

The Canon understood that, to live comfortably with Mademoiselle Gamard, he must always show her the same respect and attention, and be more infallible than the Pope. To attain this end he established no points of contact between himself and her beyond what the strictest politeness required, and those necessarily subsisting between two persons living under the same roof. Thus, though he and the Abbé Troubert regularly took their three meals a days, he had never appeared at breakfast, but had accustomed Mademoiselle Gamard to send up to him, in his bed, a cup of coffee with milk. Then, he had avoided the boredom of supper by always taking tea at some house where he spent the evening. Thus he rarely saw his landlady at any time of the day excepting at dinner, but he always came into the room a few minutes before the hour. During this polite little visit, every day of the twelve years he had spent under her roof he had asked her the same questions and received the same answers. How Mademoiselle Gamard had slept during the night, the breakfast, little domestic events, the appearance of her face, the health of her person, the weather, the length of the Church services, the incidents of the morning's Mass, the health of this or that priest, constituted the themes of this daily dialogue.

During dinner he always indulged her with indirect flattery, going on from the quality of the fish, the excellence of some seasoning, or the merits of a sauce, to

those of Mademoiselle Gamard and her virtues as a housekeeper. He was sure of soothing all the old maid's conceits when he praised the art with which her preserves were made, her gherkins pickled, and the excellence of her jam, her pies, and other gastronomical inventions. Finally, the wily Canon never quitted her yellow drawing-room without remarking that there was not another house in Tours where the coffee was so good as that he had just been drinking.

Thanks to this perfect comprehension of Mademoiselle Gamard's character, and this science of life as practised by the Canon for those twelve years, no grounds had ever occurred for a discussion on any matter of domestic discipline. The Abbé Chapeloud had from the first discerned every angle, every rasping edge, every asperity in this old maid, and had so regulated the effect of the tangents where they inevitably met, as to secure from her every concession needed for peace and happiness in life. And Mademoiselle Gamard would always say that Canon Chapeloud was a most amiable man, very easy to live with, and full of wit.

As to the Abbé Troubert, the bigot never by any chance spoke of him. Troubert had so completely fallen into the routine of her life, like a satellite in the orbit of its planet, that he had become to her a sort of mongrel creature between those of the human and those of the canine species; he filled a place in her mind exactly below that occupied by her friends and that filled by a fat asthmatic pug-dog to which she was tenderly devoted; she managed him completely, and their interests became so inextricably knit that many persons of Mademoiselle Gamard's circle supposed that the Abbé Troubert had an eye to the old maid's fortune, and was attaching her to him by his constant patience, guiding her all the more effectually because he affected to obey her, never allowing her to see in him the faintest wish to rule her.

When the Canon died, the old maid, anxious to have

a boarder of quiet habits, naturally thought of this priest. The Canon's will had not yet been opened when Mademoiselle Gamard was already meditating giving the departed Canon's upper rooms to her worthy Abbé Troubert, whom she thought but poorly lodged on the ground floor. But when the Abbé Birotteau came to discuss with her the written conditions of her terms, she found that he was so much in love with the lodgings for which he had long cherished a passion he might now avow, that she did not venture to propose an exchange, and affection gave way before the pressure of interest. To console her favourite Abbé, Mademoiselle substituted a parquet flooring in a neat pattern for the white Château-Renaud tiles in the ground-floor rooms, and rebuilt a chimney that smoked.

The Abbé Birotteau had seen his friend Chapeloud constantly for twelve years, without its ever having occurred to him to wonder why he was so excessively circumspect in his intercourse with the old maid. When he came to live under this saintly damsel's roof he felt like a lover on the verge of happiness. Even if he had not been blinded by natural stupidity, his eyes were too much dazzled by contentment for him to be capable of gauging Mademoiselle Gamard or of considering the due measure of his daily relations with her. Mademoiselle Gamard, seen from afar, through the prism of the material enjoyment the Abbé dreamed of finding with her, appeared to him an admirable creature, a perfect Christian, an essentially charitable soul, the woman of the Gospel, the wise Virgin graced with the humble and modest virtues which shed celestial fragrance over life. And thus, with all the enthusiasm of a man who has reached a long-wished-for goal, with the simplicity of a child and the silly heedlessness of an old man devoid of worldly experience, he came into Mademoiselle Gamard's life as a fly is caught in a spider's web.

So the first day he was to dine and sleep in the old

maid's house he lingered in her drawing-room, as much in the wish to make acquaintance with her as in the inexplicable embarrassment that often troubles shy people and makes them fear lest they should be rude if they break off a conversation to leave the room. So there he remained all the evening. Another old maid, a friend of Birotteau's, Mademoiselle Salomon de Villenoix, came in the evening. Then Mademoiselle Gamard had the joy of arranging a game of boston. The Abbé, as he went to bed, thought he had had a very pleasant evening.

As yet he knew Mademoiselle Gamard and the Abbé Troubert but very little, and saw only the surface. Few persons show their faults unveiled at first. Generally everybody tries to assume an attractive exterior. So Birotteau conceived the delightful purpose of devoting his evenings to Mademoiselle Gamard instead of spending them elsewhere. The lady had some few years since conceived a desire which revived more strongly every day. This desire, common to old men, and even to pretty women, had become in her a passion like that of Birotteau for his friend Chapeloud's rooms, and was rooted in the old maid's heart by the feelings of pride, egoism, envy, and vanity which are innate in the worldly-minded. This story repeats itself in every age. You have but slightly to enlarge the circle at the bottom of which these personages are about to move, to find the co-efficient motive of events which happen in the highest ranks of society.

Mademoiselle Gamard spent her evenings at six or eight different houses by turns. Whether it was that she was annoyed at having to seek company, and thought that at her age she had a right to expect some return; whether her conceit was affronted by her having no circle of her own; or whether it was that her vanity craved the compliments and amusements she saw her friends enjoying,—all her ambition was to make her *salon*

a centre of union towards which a certain number of persons would tend every evening with pleasure. When Birotteau and his friend Mademoiselle Salomon had spent a few evenings in her room with the faithful and patient Abbé Troubert, one night, as she came out of Saint-Gatien, Mademoiselle Gamard said to the kind friends of whom she had hitherto considered herself the slave, that those who cared to see her might very well come once a week to her house, where a sufficient party met already to make up a game of boston; that she could not leave her new boarder, the Abbé Birotteau, alone; that Mademoiselle Salomon had not yet missed a single evening of the week; that she belonged to her boarders; and that, etc., etc.

Her speech was all the more humbly haughty and volubly sweet because Mademoiselle Salomon de Villenoix belonged to the most aristocratic circle in Tours. Though Mademoiselle Salomon came solely for the Abbé's sake, Mademoiselle Gamard triumphed in having her in her drawing-room. Thanks to the Abbé Birotteau, she found herself on the eve of succeeding in her great scheme of forming a circle which might become as numerous and as agreeable as were those of Madame de Listomère, of Mademoiselle Merlin de la Blottière, and other devout persons in a position to receive the pious society of Tours. But, alas! the Abbé Birotteau brought Mademoiselle Gamard's hopes to an overthrow.

Now, if any persons, who have attained in life the enjoyment of a long-wished-for happiness, have entered into the gladness the Abbé must have felt in lying down to rest in Chapeloud's bed, they must also form a slight notion of Mademoiselle Gamard's chagrin at the ruin of her cherished scheme. After accepting his good fortune patiently enough for six months, Birotteau deserted his home, carrying with him Mademoiselle Salomon.

In spite of unheard-of efforts, the ambitious Gamard had secured no more than five or six recruits, whose

fidelity was very problematical, and at least four unfailing visitors were needed for regular boston. She was consequently obliged to make honourable amends and return to her old friends, for old maids are too poor company to themselves not to crave the doubtful pleasures of society.

The causes of this defection are easily imagined. Though the Abbé was one of those to whom Paradise shall one day be opened in virtue of the words, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit,' he, like many fools, could not endure the weariness inflicted on him by other fools. Unintelligent persons are like weeds that thrive in good ground; they love to be amused in proportion to the degree in which they weary themselves. Being the incarnation of the dulness they suffer from, the craving they perpetually feel to be divorced from themselves produces the mania for excitement, the need to be where they are not, which characterises them as it does other creatures who lack feeling, or whose lot is a failure, or who suffer by their own fault. Without understanding too clearly the vacuity and nullity of Mademoiselle Gamard, or discerning the smallness of her mind, poor Birotteau discovered, too late for happiness, the faults she had in common with all old maids, as well as those personal to herself.

What is evil, in other people, contrasts so strongly with what is good, that it generally strikes the eye before inflicting a wound. This moral phenomenon might at need justify the tendency that leads us all more or less to evil speaking. Socially speaking, it is so natural to satirise the faults of others, that we ought to forgive the severe gossip to which our own absurdities give rise, and wonder at nothing but calumny.

But the good Abbé's eyes were never at the precise focus which enables the worldly wise to see and at once evade their neighbours' sharp tongues; to discover his landlady's faults, he was obliged to endure the warning given by nature to all its creatures, that of suffering.

Old maids, having never bent their temper or their lives to other lives and other tempers, as woman's destiny requires, have for the most part a mania for making everything about them bend to them. In Mademoiselle Gamard this feeling had degenerated into despotism, but this despotism could only be exerted in small things. For instance—out of a thousand cases—the basket of counters and fish placed on the boston table for the Abbé Birotteau must be left on the spot where she had put it, and the Abbé irritated her extremely by moving it, as he did almost every evening. What was the cause of this touchiness foolishly provoked by mere trifles, and what was its object? No one could say; Mademoiselle Gamard herself did not know.

Though very lamblike by nature, the new boarder did not like to feel the crook too often, any more than a sheep, especially a crook set with nails. Without understanding Canon Troubert's amazing patience, Birotteau was anxious to escape the bliss which Mademoiselle Gamard was bent on seasoning to her own taste, for she thought she could compound happiness as she could preserves; but the luckless priest set to work very clumsily, as a result of his perfectly artless nature. So the separation was not effected without some clawing and pricking, to which the Abbé Birotteau tried to seem insensible.

By the end of the first year of his life under Mademoiselle Gamard's roof the Abbé had fallen into his old habits, spending two evenings a week at Madame de Listomère's, three with Mademoiselle Salomon, and the other two with Mademoiselle Merlin de la Blottière. These ladies moved in the aristocratic sphere of Tours society, to which Mademoiselle Gamard was not admitted. So the landlady was excessively indignant at the Abbé's defection, which made her aware of her small importance: any kind of selection implying some contempt for the rejected object.

'Monsieur Birotteau did not find us good enough company,' the Abbé Troubert would say to Mademoiselle Gamard's friends when she was obliged to give up her 'evenings.' 'He is a wit, a *gourmet*! He must have fashion, luxury, brilliant conversation, the tittle-tattle of the town.'

And such words always prompted Mademoiselle Gamard to praise the Canon's excellent temper at the expense of Birotteau's.

'He is not so clever when all is said,' she remarked. 'But for Canon Chapeloud he would never have been received by Madame de Listomère. Oh, I lost a great deal when the Abbé Chapeloud died. What an amiable man! and so easy to live with! Indeed, in twelve years we never had the smallest difficulty or disagreement.'

Mademoiselle Gamard painted so unflattering a portrait of Monsieur Birotteau that her innocent boarder was regarded by this citizen circle, secretly hostile to the aristocratic class, as an essentially fractious man, very difficult to get on with. Then for a few weeks the old maid had the satisfaction of hearing herself pitied by her female friends, who, without believing a word of what they said, repeated again and again, 'How can you, who are so gentle and so kind, have inspired him with such dislike?——' or, 'Be comforted, dear Mademoiselle Gamard, every one knows you too well——' and so forth.

Delighted, nevertheless, to escape spending an evening each week in the Close—the most deserted and gloomy spot in all Tours, and the most remote from the centre of life—they all blessed the Abbé.

Love or hatred must constantly increase between two persons who are always together; every moment fresh reasons are found for loving or hating better. Thus to Mademoiselle Gamard the Abbé Birotteau became unendurable. Eighteen months after taking him as a boarder, just when the good man believed he had found the peace of contentment in the silence of aversion, and prided

himself on having come so comfortably to terms with the old woman, to use his expression, he was to her the object of covert persecution and calmly planned animosity.

The four capital facts of the closed door, the forgotten slippers, the lack of fire, the candlestick taken to his rooms, alone could betray the terrible enmity of which the last effects were not to fall on him till the moment when they would be irremediable. As he went to sleep, the good Abbé racked his brain, but vainly—and, indeed, he must soon have come to the bottom of it—to account for Mademoiselle Gamard's singularly uncivil behaviour. In point of fact, as he had originally acted very logically, obeying the natural law of his egoism, he could not possibly form a guess as to how he had offended his landlady. While great things are simple to understand, and easy to express, the mean things of life need much detail. The incidents which constitute the prologue, as it were, to this parochial drama, in which the passions will be seen not less violent than if they had been excited by important interests, necessitated this long introduction, and any exact historian would have found it difficult to abridge the trivial tale.

When he awoke next morning, the Abbé's thoughts were so much set on the canonry, that he forgot the four circumstances which, the evening before, had appeared to him to be sinister prognostics of a future full of disaster. Birotteau was not the man to get up without a fire; he rang to announce to Marianne that he was awake, and wanted her; then, as he was wont, he lay lost in a somnolent, half-dreamy state, during which, as a rule, the woman made the fire, and dragged him gently from his last doze by a hum of inquiry and quiet bustle —a sort of music that he liked.

Half an hour went by, and Marianne had not appeared. The Abbé, already half a Canon, was about to ring again,

when he stayed his hand on hearing a man's step on the stairs. In fact, the Abbé Troubert, after discreetly tapping at the door, at Birotteau's bidding came in. This call did not surprise him; the priests were in the habit of paying each other a visit once a month. The Canon was at once amazed that Marianne should not yet have lighted his quasi-colleague's fire. He opened a window, called Marianne in a rough tone, and bid her come up at once; then, turning to his brother priest, he said, 'If Mademoiselle should hear that you have no fire, she would give Marianne a good scolding.'

After this speech he inquired for Birotteau's health, and asked him, in an insinuating voice, whether he had any recent news that could encourage his hope of being made a Canon. The Abbé explained to him what was being done, and guilelessly told him who the personages were that Madame de Listomère was canvassing, not knowing that Troubert had never forgiven that lady for not inviting him to her house—him—Canon Troubert, twice designate to be made Vicar-General of the diocese.

It would be impossible to meet with two figures offering so many points of contrast as those of these two priests. Troubert, tall and lean, had a bilious yellow hue, while Birotteau was what is familiarly called crummy. His face, round and florid, spoke of good-nature devoid of ideas; while Troubert's, long and furrowed by deep wrinkles, wore at times an expression of irony and scorn; still, attentive examination was needed to discover these feelings. The Canon was habitually and absolutely placid, his eyelids almost always lowered over a pair of orange-hazel eyes, whose glance was at will very clear and piercing. Red hair completed this countenance, which was constantly clouded under the shroud cast over his features by serious meditations. Several persons had at first supposed him to be absorbed in high and rooted ambition; but those who thought they knew him best

had ended by demolishing this opinion, representing him as stultified by Mademoiselle Gamard's tyranny, or worn by long fasting. He rarely spoke, and never laughed. When he happened to be pleasurably moved, a faint smile appeared and lost itself in the furrows on his cheeks.

Birotteau, on the other hand, was all expansiveness, all openness; he liked titbits, and could be amused by a trifle with the artlessness of a man free from gall and malice. The Abbé Troubert at first sight inspired an involuntary feeling of dread, while the Vicar made every one who looked at him smile kindly. When the tall Canon stalked solemnly along the cloisters and aisles of Saint-Gatien, his brow bent, his eye stern, he commanded respect; his bowed figure harmonised with the yellow vaulting of the cathedral; there was something monumental in the folds of his gown, and worthy of the sculptor's art. But the good little Abbé moved without dignity, trotted and pattered, looking as if he rolled along.

And yet the two men had one point of resemblance. While Troubert's ambitious looks, by making the world afraid of him, had perhaps contributed to condemn him to the modest dignity of a mere Canon, Birotteau's character and appearance seemed to stamp him for ever as no more than a *vicaire* of the Cathedral. The Abbé Troubert meanwhile, at the age of fifty, by the moderation of his conduct, by the apparently total absence of any ambition in his aims, and by his saintly life, had dispelled the fears his superiors had conceived of his supposed cleverness and his alarming exterior. Indeed, for a year past, his health had been seriously impaired, so that his early promotion to the dignity of Vicar-General to the Archbishop seemed probable. His rivals even hoped for his appointment, to enable them the more effectually to prepare for their own, during the short span of life that might yet be granted him by a malady that had become chronic. Birotteau's triple

chin, far from suggesting the same hopes, displayed to the candidates who were struggling for the canonry all the symptoms of vigorous health, and his gout seemed to them the proverbial assurance of a long life.

The Abbé Chapeloud, a man of great good sense, whose amiability had secured him the friendship of persons in good society and of the various heads of the diocese, had always opposed the elevation of the Abbé Troubert, secretly and with much address; he had even hindered his admission to any of the *salons* where the best set in Tours were wont to meet, though during his lifetime Troubert always treated him with great respect, and on all occasions showed him the utmost deference. This persistent submissiveness had not availed to change the deceased Canon's opinion; during his last walk with Birotteau, he had said to him once more—

'Do not trust that dry pole Troubert! He is Sixtus v. reduced to the scale of a bishopric.'

This was Mademoiselle Gamard's friend and messmate, who, the very day after that on which she had, so to speak, declared war with poor Birotteau, had come to call on him with every mark of friendliness.

'You must excuse Marianne,' said Troubert as she came in. 'I fancy she did my room first. My place is very damp, and I coughed a great deal during the night. —You are very healthily situated here,' he added, looking up at the mouldings.

'Oh, I am lodged like a Canon!' replied Birotteau with a smile.

'And I like a curate,' replied the humble priest.

'Yes, but before long you will be lodged in the Archbishop's Palace,' said the good Abbé, who only wanted that everybody should be happy.

'Oh! or in the graveyard. God's will be done!' and Troubert looked up to heaven with a resigned air. 'I came,' he went on, 'to beg you to lend me the *General*

Clergy List. No one but you has the book at Tours.'

'Take it out of the bookcase,' replied Birotteau, reminded by the Canon's last words of all the joys of his life.

The tall priest went into the library, and remained there all the time the Abbé was dressing. Presently the breakfast-bell rang, and Birotteau, reflecting that but for Troubert's visit he would have had no fire to get up by, said to himself, 'He is a good man!'

The two priests went down together, each armed with an enormous folio, which they laid on one of the consoles in the dining-room.

'What in the world is that?' asked Mademoiselle Gamard in sharp tones, addressing Birotteau. 'You are not going to lumber up my dining-room with old books, I hope!'

'They are some books I wanted,' said the Abbé Troubert. 'Monsieur is kind enough to lend them to me.'

'I might have guessed that,' said she with a scornful smile. 'Monsieur Birotteau does not often study such big books.'

'And how are you, Mademoiselle?' asked the Abbé in a piping voice.

'Why, not at all well,' she replied curtly. 'You were the cause of my being roused from my first sleep, and I felt the effects all night.' And as she seated herself, Mademoiselle Gamard added, 'Gentlemen, the milk will get cold.'

Astounded at being so sourly received by his hostess when he expected her to apologise, but frightened, as timid people are, by the prospect of a discussion, especially when they themselves are the subject of it, the poor Abbé took his place in silence. Then, recognising in Mademoiselle Gamard's face the obvious symptoms of a bad temper, he sat warring with his

common-sense, which advised him not to submit to her want of manners, while his nature prompted him to avoid a quarrel. Birotteau, a prey to this internal struggle, began by seriously studying the broad-green stripes painted on the oilcloth cover, which, from immemorial habit, Mademoiselle Gamard always left on the table during breakfast, heedless of the frayed edges and scars innumerable that covered this cloth. The two boarders were seated opposite each other, in cane arm-chairs at each end of the table, a royal square; the place between them being occupied by the landlady, who towered above the table from a chair mounted on runners, padded with cushions, and backing on the dining-room stove. This room and the common sitting-room were on the ground floor, under the Abbé Birotteau's bedroom and drawing-room. When the Abbé had received from Mademoiselle Gamard his cup of sweetened coffee, he felt chilled by the utter silence in which he was doomed to perform the usually cheerful function of breakfast. He dared not look either at Troubert's expressionless face, nor at the old maid's threatening countenance; so, to do something, he turned to the pug-dog, overburdened with fat, lying near the stove on a cushion whence it never stirred, finding always on the left a little plate of dainties, and on the right a saucer of clean water.

'Well, my pet,' said he, 'so you want your coffee!'

This personage, one of the most important members of the household, but not a troublesome one, since he never barked now, and left the conversation to his mistress, looked up at Birotteau with little eyes buried in the folds of fat that wrinkled his face. Then he cunningly shut them again.

To give the measure of the priest's discomfiture, it must be explained that, being gifted with a voice and volubility as resonant and meaningless as the sound of

an india-rubber ball, he asserted, without being able to give the faculty any reason for his opinion, that speech favoured digestion. Mademoiselle Gamard, who shared this theory of hygiene, had never hitherto failed to converse during meals, notwithstanding their misunderstanding; but now for some few days the Abbé had racked his wits in vain to ask her insidious questions which might loosen her tongue. If the narrow limits to which this story is restricted would allow of a report in full of one of these conversations which always provoked the Abbé Troubert's bitter and sardonic smiles, it would give a perfect picture of the Bœotian existence of provincials. Some clever men might perhaps be even pleased to know the extraordinary amplitude given by the Abbé Birotteau and Mademoiselle Gamard to their personal opinions on politics, religion, and literature. There would certainly be some very funny things to tell: such as their reasons, in 1820, for doubting the death of Napoleon, or the conjectures which led them to believe in the survival of Louis XVII., smuggled away in a hollow log of wood. Who would not have laughed to hear them asserting, with arguments peculiarly their own, that the King of France alone spent the money collected in taxes; that the Chambers met to destroy the Clergy; that more than thirteen hundred thousand persons had perished on the scaffold during the Revolution? Then they discussed the press, knowing nothing of how many newspapers were issued, having not the smallest idea of what this modern power is. Finally, Monsieur Birotteau listened respectfully to Mademoiselle Gamard when she asserted that a man fed on an egg every morning would infallibly die at the end of a year, and that it had been known; that a soft roll eaten without drinking for a few days would cure sciatica; that all the workmen who had been employed in the destruction of the Abbey of Saint-Martin had died within six months; that a certain préfet had done his

utmost in Bonaparte's time to ruin the towers of Saint-Gatien, and a thousand other absurd stories.

But at the present juncture Birotteau felt his tongue dead within him; so he resigned himself to eating without trying to converse. He soon thought that such silence was perilous to his digestion, and boldly said, 'This is excellent coffee!' But the courageous act fell flat.

After looking at the narrow strip of sky above the garden, between the two black buttresses of Saint-Gatien, the Abbé again was brave enough to remark, 'It will be finer to-day than it was yesterday.'

At this Mademoiselle Gamard did no more than cast one of her most ingratiating glances at Monsieur Troubert, and then turn her eyes full of terrible severity on Birotteau, who was happily looking down.

No being of the female sex was better able to assume the elegiac attitude of an old maid than Mademoiselle Sophie Gamard; but to do justice in describing a person whose character will give the greatest interest to the trivial events of this drama, and to the antecedent lives of the figures playing a part in it, it will be well here to epitomise the ideas of which the old maid is the outcome. The habits of life form the soul, and the soul forms the countenance. If in society, as in the universe, everything must have a purpose, there yet are on this earth some existences of which the use and purpose are undiscoverable; morality and political economy alike reject the individual that consumes without producing, that fills a place on earth without diffusing either good or evil—for evil, no doubt, is a form of good of which the results are not immediately manifest. Very rarely does an old maid fail to place herself by her own act in this class of unproductive creatures. Now if the consciousness of work done gives productive beings a sense of satisfaction which helps them to endure life, the knowledge that they are a burthen on others, or even

merely useless, must produce the contrary effect, and give to the inert a contempt for themselves as great as that they provoke in others. This stern social reprobation is one of the causes which, unknown to themselves, contribute to implant in their soul the grievance which is stamped on their faces.

A prejudice, not perhaps without a basis of truth, everywhere gives rise—and in France more than elsewhere—to marked disfavour being felt towards a woman with whom no man has chosen to share his fortunes, or to endure the woes of life. And an age comes to unmarried women when the world, rightly or wrongly, condemns them on the strength of the disdain to which they are victims. If ugly, the amiability of their nature ought to have redeemed the imperfections of their persons; if pretty, their loneliness must have its cause in serious reasons. It is hard to decide which of the two classes is most to be contemned. If their single life is deliberately chosen, if it is a determination to be independent, neither men nor mothers can forgive them for having shirked the sacrifice of woman by refusing to know the passions that make her sex pathetic. To reject its sufferings is to forgo its poetry, to cease to deserve the sweet consolations to which a mother has always uncontested rights. Then the generous feelings, the exquisite qualities of woman, can only be developed by constant exercise. When she remains unmarried, a creature of the female sex is a self-contradiction: egoistical and cold, she fills us with horror.

This pitiless verdict is unfortunately too just for old maids to misinterpret its motives. These ideas germinate in their heart as naturally as the effects of their desolate life are imprinted on their features. Thus they wither, because the constant expansion, or the happiness that blooms in a woman's face and lends softness to her movements, has never existed in them. Then they grow

harsh and discontented, because a creature that fails of its purpose is unhappy, it suffers, and suffering brings forth viciousness. In fact, before an unmarried woman spites herself for her loneliness, she accuses the whole world, and from accusation there is but one step to the desire for revenge.

Again, the ill grace that disfigures their persons is an inevitable outcome of their life. Never having felt the necessity to please, elegance and good taste are unknown to them. This feeling gradually leads them to choose everything to suit their own convenience at the cost of what might be agreeable to others. Without quite understanding their dissimilarity to other women, at last they observe it and suffer from it. Jealousy is an indelible passion in the female heart. Old maids are jealous for nothing, and know only the woes of the single passion which men can forgive in women because it flatters them. Thus tormented on every side, and compelled to reject the development of their nature, old maids are always conscious of a moral uneasiness to which they never become accustomed. Is it not hard at any age, especially for a woman, to read a feeling of repugnance on every face, when it ought to have been her fate to inspire none but sensations of kindliness in the hearts of those about her? Hence an old maid's glance is always askance, not so much from modesty as from fear and shame.

Now, it is impossible that a person perpetually at war with herself, or at loggerheads with life, should leave others in peace and never envy their happiness. This world of gloomy ideas lay complete in Mademoiselle Gamard's dull grey eyes; and the broad, dark circle in which they were set spoke of the long struggles of her solitary life. All the wrinkles on her face were straight lines. The form of her brow, head, and cheeks was characterised by rigidity and hardness. Without heeding them, she left the hairs, once brown, of two or three

moles on her chin to grow as they would. Her thin lips scarcely covered her long but sufficiently white teeth. She was dark, and her hair had once been black, but terrible headaches had turned it white. This disaster led her to wear a front; but not knowing how to put it on so as to conceal the junction, there often was a small gap between her cap-border and the black ribbon that fastened this half wig, very carelessly curled. Her gown, of thin silk in summer, of merinos in winter, and always of Carmelite brown, fitted her ungraceful figure and thin arms rather too closely. Her collar, always limp, betrayed a throat whose reddish skin was as finely lined as an oak leaf looked at in the light.

Her parentage accounted for the faults of her figure. She was the daughter of a dealer in fire-logs, a peasant who had risen in the world. At eighteen she might have been fresh and plump, but not a trace was now left either of the white skin or the fine colour she boasted of having then had. The hues of her complexion had acquired the dull pallor common enough in very devout persons. An aquiline nose was of all her features that which most strongly expressed the despotism of her ideas, just as the flatness of her forehead revealed her narrowness of mind. Her movements had an odd abruptness bereft of all grace; and only to see her pull her handkerchief out of her bag and loudly blow her nose would have told you what her character and habits were. Fairly tall, she held herself very upright, justifying the remark of a naturalist, who explains the stiffness of old maids physiologically by declaring that all their joints anchylose. She walked so that the motion did not distribute itself equally over her whole person, or produce the graceful undulations that are so attractive in a woman; she moved all of a piece, so to speak, seeming to lift herself at every step, like the statue of the Commendatore. In her moments of good-humour she would give it out, as all old maids do, that she could

have been married, but that, happily, she had found out her lover's faithlessness in time, and she thus, without knowing it, passed judgment on her heart in favour of her sense of self-interest.

This typical figure of an old maid was suitably set against a background of the grotesque pattern, representing Turkish landscapes, of a satin wall-paper with which the dining-room was hung. Mademoiselle Gamard habitually occupied this room, ornamented by two consoles and a barometer. In the place occupied by each priest was a little footstool in worsted work of faded hues.

The public sitting-room, where she received company, was worthy of her. The room will be at once familiar when it is known that it went by the name of the yellow drawing-room; the hangings were yellow, the furniture and wall-paper yellow; on the chimney-shelf, in front of a mirror with a gilt frame, candlesticks and a clock in cut glass reflected a hard glitter to the eye. As to Mademoiselle Gamard's private sanctum, no one had ever been allowed to enter it. It could only be conjectured that it was full of the odds and ends, the shabby furniture, the rags and tatters, so to speak, which all old maids collect and cling to so fondly.

This was the woman who was destined to exert the greatest influence over the Abbé Birotteau's latter days. Having failed to exercise the energies bestowed on woman in the way intended by nature, and urged by the need of expending them, this old maid had thrown them into the sordid intrigue, the petty tittle-tattle of provincial life, and the selfish scheming which at last exclusively absorbs all old maids.

Birotteau, for his woe, had developed in Sophie Gamard the only feelings this unhappy creature could possibly know, those of hatred; these, till now latent, as a result of the calm monotony of a country-town life, whose horizon was to her more especially narrow, were

presently to become all the more intense for being wreaked on small things, and in a narrow sphere of activity. Birotteau was one of those men who are predestined to suffer everything, because, as they never foresee anything, they can avoid nothing; everything falls on them.

'Yes, it will be fine,' the Canon replied after a pause, seeming to come out of his meditations and to wish to fulfil the laws of good manners.

Birotteau, frightened at the time that had elapsed between the remark and the reply, since he, for the first time in his life, had swallowed his coffee without speaking, left the dining-room, where his heart was held as in a vice. Feeling his cup of coffee lie heavy on his stomach, he went to walk, sadly enough, up and down the narrow box-edged paths which marked out a star in the garden. But as he turned after his first round, he saw the Abbé Troubert and Mademoiselle Gamard standing at the glass door of the drawing-room; he with his arms crossed, as motionless as the statue on a tomb, she leaning against the shutter-door. Both, as they watched him, seemed to be counting the number of his steps.

To a timid person there is nothing so distressing as being the object of inquisitive inspection; when it is made by the eyes of hatred, the sort of suffering it inflicts becomes an intolerable martyrdom. Presently the Abbé fancied that he was hindering Mademoiselle Gamard and the Canon from taking their walk. This notion, inspired alike by fear and by good-nature, acquired such proportions, that he abandoned the place. He went away, already thinking no more of his canonry, so greatly was he worried by the woman's maddening tyranny.

By chance, and happily for him, he was kept very busy at Saint-Gatien, where there were several funerals, a marriage, and two baptisms. This enabled him to forget his troubles. When his appetite warned him of

the dinner hour, he took out his watch in some alarm, seeing that it was some minutes past four. He knew Mademoiselle Gamard's punctuality, so he hurried home.

He saw the first course brought down again as he passed the kitchen. Then on going into the dining-room, the old maid said to him in a tone of voice which betrayed alike the harshness of a reproof and the glee of finding her boarder in fault, 'It is half-past four, Monsieur Birotteau; you knew we should not wait for you.'

The priest looked at the dining-room clock, and the arrangement of the gauze wrapper, intended to protect it from dust, showed him that his landlady had wound it in the course of the morning, and had allowed herself the pleasure of setting it faster than the clock of Saint-Gatien's. There was nothing to be said. The least word of the suspicion he had conceived would have sprung the most terrible and plausible of those explosions of eloquence which Mademoiselle Gamard, like all women of her class, could give vent to in such cases.

The thousand-and-one vexations that a maid-servant can inflict on her master, or a wife on her husband, in the daily course of private life, were imagined by Mademoiselle Gamard, who heaped them on her boarder. The way in which she plotted her conspiracies against the poor Abbé's domestic comfort bore the stamp of deeply malignant genius. She contrived never to be in the wrong.

By the end of a week after the opening of this tale, his life in the house, and his position towards Mademoiselle Gamard, revealed to him a plot, hatching for six months past. So long as the old maid had been covert in her revenge, and the priest could voluntarily keep up his self-deceit, refusing to believe in her malevolent purpose, the moral effects had made no great progress in him. But since the incidents of the displacement of the candlestick and the clock put too fast, Birotteau could no longer doubt that he was living under

the rule of an aversion that kept an ever-watchful eye on him. From this he rapidly sank into despair, for ever seeing Mademoiselle Gamard's lean and talon-like fingers ready to claw his heart.

The old maid, happy in living on a sentiment so teeming with excitement as revenge is, delighted in hovering and wheeling above the Abbé as a bird of prey hovers and circles over a field mouse before seizing it. She had long plotted a scheme which the bewildered priest could not possibly guess, and which she soon began to unfold, showing the genius that can be displayed in small things by isolated beings whose soul, incapable of apprehending the grandeur of true piety, has lost itself in the trivialities of devotion. The last and most frightful aggravation of his torments was that the nature of them prohibited Birotteau, an effusive man who loved to be pitied and comforted, from enjoying the little solace of relating them to his friends. The small amount of tact he owed to his shyness made him dread appearing ridiculous by troubling himself about such silly trifles. At the same time, these silly trifles made up his whole life, the life he loved, full of busy vacuity and vacuous business, a dull, grey life, in which too strong a feeling was a misfortune, and the absence of all excitement is happiness. Thus the poor Abbé's paradise had suddenly become a hell. In short, his torments were intolerable.

The terror with which he contemplated an explanation with Mademoiselle Gamard grew daily, and the secret misfortunes which blighted every hour of his old age injured his health. One morning, as he put on his speckled blue stockings, he observed that the circumference of his calf had shrunk by eight lines. Appalled at such a terribly unmistakable symptom, he determined to make an effort to persuade the Abbé Troubert to intervene officially between himself and Mademoiselle Gamard.

When he found himself in the presence of the imposing Canon, who came out of a study crammed with papers, where he was always at work, admitting nobody, to receive him in a bare room, the Abbé was almost ashamed to speak of Mademoiselle Gamard's petty aggravations to a man who seemed so seriously occupied. But after having suffered all the misery of mental deliberation which humble, weak, or irresolute persons go through, even with regard to trifles, he made up his mind to explain the position to the Canon, not without feeling his heart swollen by extraordinary throbs. Troubert listened with a cold, grave air, trying, but in vain, to control some smiles, which, to intelligent eyes, might have betrayed the satisfaction of a secret desire. A flash sparkled in his eye when Birotteau described to him, with the eloquence lent by true emotion, the bitterness that was incessantly poured out for him; but Troubert at once covered his eyes with his hand, a gesture common to great thinkers, and preserved his habitually dignified attitude.

When the Abbé ceased speaking, he would have been puzzled indeed if he had tried to read any sign of the feelings he imagined he should excite in this mysterious priest, on his face, mottled now with yellow patches—yellower than even his usual bilious complexion. After a moment's silence, the Canon made one of those replies of which every word must have been carefully studied to give them their full bearing, but which subsequently showed to capable persons the amazing depth of his mind and the power of his intellect.

He finally crushed Birotteau by saying that all these things surprised him the more, because, but for his brother's explanation, he would never have discerned them. He ascribed this dulness of perception to his important occupations, to his work, and to the supremacy of certain lofty thoughts, which did not allow of his heeding the trivialities of life? He pointed out, but

without assuming the airs of wishing to censure the conduct of a man whose years and learning commanded his respect, that 'the hermits of old rarely thought about their food, or their dwelling in the deserts, where they gave themselves up to holy contemplation,' and that 'in our days the priest could, in mind, make a desert for himself in every place.' Then, returning to Birotteau, he remarked that 'such squabbles were a quite new thing to him. During twelve years nothing of the kind had ever arisen between Mademoiselle Gamard and the venerated Abbé Chapeloud. As for himself, he could, no doubt, act as moderator between the priest and their landlady, since his friendship for her did not overstep the limits imposed by the laws of the Church on its faithful ministers; but then justice would require that he should also hear Mademoiselle Gamard. At the same time, he discerned no change in her; he had always seen her thus; he had willingly yielded to some of her vagaries, knowing that the excellent woman was kindness and sweetness itself; these little caprices of temper were to be ascribed to the sufferings caused by a pulmonary trouble, of which she never spoke, resigning herself to it as a true Christian.' He ended by saying that 'when he should have lived a few years longer with Mademoiselle, he would appreciate her better, and recognise the beauties of her admirable character.'

The Abbé Birotteau came away bewildered. Under the absolute necessity of taking counsel with himself alone, he gauged Mademoiselle Gamard by himself. The poor man thought that by absenting himself for a few days this woman's hatred would burn itself out for lack of fuel. So he determined to go, as he had done before now, to spend some time at a country place where Madame de Listomère always went at the end of the autumn, a season when, in Touraine, the sky is usually clear and mild. Poor man! He was thus carrying out the secret wishes of his terrible enemy, whose schemes

could not be thwarted by anything short of monk-like endurance; while he, guessing nothing, and not knowing his own business even, was doomed to fall like a lamb under the first blow from the butcher.

Lying on the slope between the town of Tours and the heights of Saint-Georges, facing the south, and sheltered by cliffs, Madame de Listomère's estate combined all the charms of the country with the pleasures of the town. It was not more than a ten-minutes' drive from the Bridge of Tours to the gate of this house, known as *l'Alouette* (the Lark)—an immense convenience in a place where no one will disturb himself for any earthly thing, not even in quest of pleasure.

The Abbé Birotteau had been about ten days at l'Alouette, when one morning, at the breakfast hour, the lodgekeeper came to tell him that Monsieur Caron wished to speak with him. Monsieur Caron was a lawyer employed by Mademoiselle Gamard. Birotteau, not remembering this, and conscious of no litigious difficulty to be settled with anybody in the world, left the table, not without some anxiety, to meet the lawyer; he found him sitting modestly on the parapet of a terrace.

'Your intention of remaining no longer as a resident under Mademoiselle Gamard's roof being now quite evident——' the man of business began.

'Dear me, Monsieur!' cried Birotteau, interrupting him, 'I never thought of leaving her.'

'And yet, Monsieur,' the lawyer went on, 'you must certainly have expressed yourself to that effect to Mademoiselle, since she has sent me to inquire whether you intend remaining long in the country. The event of a prolonged absence not having been provided for in your agreement, might give rise to some discussion. Now, as Mademoiselle Gamard understands it, your board——'

'Monsieur,' said Birotteau in surprise, and again inter-

rupting the lawyer, 'I did not think it could be necessary to take steps, almost legal in their nature, to——'

'Mademoiselle Gamard, wishing to preclude any difficulty,' said Monsieur Caron, 'has sent me to come to an understanding with you.'

'Very well, if you will be so obliging as to call again to-morrow, I, on my part, will have taken advice.'

'So be it,' said Caron with a bow.

The scrivener withdrew. The hapless priest, appalled by the pertinacity of Mademoiselle Gamard's persecution, went back to Madame de Listomère's dining-room looking quite upset. At his mere appearance every one asked him, 'Why, Monsieur Birotteau, what is the matter?'

The Abbé, greatly distressed, sat down without answering, so overwhelmed was he by the vague vision of his misfortune. But after breakfast, when several of his friends had gathered round a good fire in the drawing-room, Birotteau artlessly told them the tale of his catastrophe. The hearers, who were just beginning to be bored by their stay in the country, were deeply interested in an intrigue so completely in keeping with provincial life. Everybody took the Abbé's part against the old maid.

'Why!' cried Madame de Listomère, 'do you not plainly see that the Abbé Troubert wants your rooms?'

In this place the historian would have a right to sketch this lady's portrait; but it occurs to him that even those persons to whom Sterne's cognomology is unknown could surely not utter the three words MADAME DE LISTOMÈRE without seeing her—noble and dignified, tempering the austerity of piety by the antique elegance of monarchical and classic manners and polite distinction; kind, but a little formal; speaking slightly through her nose; allowing herself to read *la Nouvelle Héloïse*, and to go to the play; still wearing her own hair.

'The Abbé Birotteau must certainly not yield to that nagging old woman!' cried Monsieur de Listomère, a

lieutenant in the navy, spending a holiday with his aunt. 'If the Abbé has any courage, and will follow my advice, he will soon have recovered his peace of mind.'

In short, everybody began to analyse Mademoiselle Gamard's proceedings with the acumen peculiar to provincials, who, it certainly cannot be denied, possess the talent of laying bare the most secret human actions.

'You have not hit the mark,' said an old landowner who knew the country. 'There is something very serious under this which I have not yet mastered. The Abbé Troubert is far too deep to be so easily seen through. Our good friend Birotteau is only at the beginning of his troubles. In the first place, would he be happy and left in peace even if he gave up his rooms to Troubert? I doubt it.—If Caron came to tell you,' he went on, turning to the puzzled Abbé, 'that you had intended to leave Mademoiselle Gamard, with the object of getting you out of her house. . . . Well, you will have to go, willy nilly. That kind of man never risks a chance; they only play when they hold the trumps.'

This old gentleman, a certain Monsieur de Bourbonne, epitomised provincial ideas as completely as Voltaire epitomised the spirit of his time. This withered little old man professed in matters of dress all the indifference of a proprietor whose estate has a quotable value in the department. His countenance, tanned by the sun of Touraine, was shrewd rather than clever. He was accustomed to weigh his words, to consider his actions, and he concealed his deep caution under a delusive bluntness. The very least observation was enough to discover that, like a Norman peasant, he would get the advantage in every stroke of business. He was great in œnology—the favourite science of the Tourangeaux. He had managed to extend the circle of one of his estates by taking in the alluvial land of the Loire without getting into a lawsuit with the State. This achieve-

ment had established his reputation as a clever man. If, charmed by Monsieur de Bourbonne's conversation, you had asked his biography of one of his fellow provincials, 'Oh! he is a cunning old fox,' would have been the proverbial reply of all who envied him, and they were many. In Touraine, as in most provinces, jealousy lies at the base of the tongue.

Monsieur de Bourbonne's remark caused a brief silence, during which the members of this little committee seemed lost in thought.

At this juncture Mademoiselle Salomon de Villenoix was announced. She had just come from Tours, prompted by her wish to be of service to Birotteau, and the news she brought completely changed the aspect of affairs. At the moment when she came in, every one but the landowner was advising Birotteau to hold his own against Troubert and Gamard, under the auspices of the aristocratic party, who would support him.

'The Vicar-General,' said Mademoiselle Salomon, 'who has all the promotions in his hands, has just been taken ill, and the Archbishop has commissioned Canon Troubert to act in his place. The nomination to the canonry now depends entirely on him. Now yesterday, at Mademoiselle de la Blottière's, the Abbé Poirel was speaking of the annoyances Monsieur Birotteau occasioned to Mademoiselle Gamard, in such a way as to seem to justify the neglect which will certainly fall on our good Abbé. "The Abbé Birotteau is a man who badly needed the Abbé Chapeloud," said he, "and since that virtuous Canon's death it has been proved that——" Then came a series of suppositions and calumnies.—You understand?'

'Troubert will be made Vicar-General,' said Monsieur de Bourbonne solemnly.

'Come now,' cried Madame de Listomère, looking at Birotteau, 'which would you prefer—to be made Canon, or to remain with Mademoiselle Gamard?'

'To be made Canon,' was the general outcry.

'Well, then,' Madame de Listomère went on, 'the Abbé Troubert and Mademoiselle Gamard must be allowed to have their way. Have they not conveyed to you indirectly by Caron's visit that, provided you consent to leave your rooms, you shall be made Canon. One good turn for another.'

Every one exclaimed at Madame de Listomère's acumen and sagacity; but her nephew, the Baron de Listomère, said in a comical tone to Monsieur de Bourbonne—

'I should have liked to see the battle between the *Gamard* and the *Birotteau*.'

But, for the Abbé's worse luck, the forces were not equal, with the worldly-wise on one side, and the old maid upheld by the Abbé Troubert on the other. The time was at hand when the struggle would become more decisive, and assume a greater scope and immense proportions.

By the advice of Madame de Listomère and most of her adherents, who were beginning to take a passionate interest in this intrigue flung into the vacuity of their country life, a footman was despatched for Monsieur Caron. The lawyer returned with amazing promptitude, a fact that alarmed no one but Monsieur de Bourbonne.

'Let us adjourn any decision till we have fuller information,' was the advice of this Fabius in a dressing-gown, whose deep reflections revealed to him some abstruse plan of battle on the Tours chessboard.

He tried to enlighten Birotteau as to the perils of his position. But the 'old fox's' shrewdness did not subserve the frenzy of the moment; he was scarcely listened to.

The meeting between the lawyer and Birotteau was brief. The Abbé came in looking quite scared, and saying, 'He requires me to sign a paper declaring my decession.'

'What barbarous word is that?' said the navy lieutenant.

'And what does it mean?' cried Madame de Listomère.

'It simply means that the Abbé is to declare his readiness to leave Mademoiselle Gamard's house,' replied Monsieur de Bourbonne, taking a pinch of snuff.

'Is that all?—Sign it!' said Madame de Listomère to Birotteau. 'If you have really made up your mind to quit her house, there can be no harm done by declaring your will.'—The *Will* of Birotteau!

'That is true,' said Monsieur de Bourbonne, shutting his snuff-box with a dry snap, of which it is impossible to render the full meaning, for it was a language by itself. 'But writing is always dangerous,' he added, placing the snuff-box on the chimney-shelf with a look that terrified the Abbé.

Birotteau was so bewildered by the upheaval of all his ideas, by the swiftness of events which had come on him and found him defenceless, and by the lightness with which his friends treated the most cherished circumstances of his lonely life, that he remained motionless, as if lost in the moon, not thinking of anything, but listening and trying to catch the sense of the hasty words everybody else was so ready with. He took up Monsieur Caron's document, and read it as though the lawyer's deed were in fact the object of his attention; but it was merely mechanical, and he signed the paper by which he declared himself ready and willing to give up his residence with Mademoiselle Gamard as well as his board, as provided by the agreement between them. When Birotteau had signed the deed Caron took it, and asked him where his client was to bestow the goods and chattels belonging to him. Birotteau mentioned Madame de Listomère's house, and the lady by a nod consented to receive the Abbé for some days, never doubting but that he would ere long be made a Canon. The old landowner wished to

see this sort of act of renunciation, and Monsieur Caron handed it to him.

'Why,' said he to the Abbé, after having read it, 'is there any written agreement between you and Mademoiselle Gamard? Where is it? What are the conditions?'

'The paper is in my rooms,' said Birotteau.

'Do you know its contents?' the old gentleman asked the lawyer.

'No, Monsieur,' said Monsieur Caron, holding out his hand for the ominous document.

'Ah, ha!' said Monsieur de Bourbonne to himself, 'you, master lawyer, are no doubt informed of what that agreement contains, but you are not paid to tell us.' And he returned the deed of 'decession' to the lawyer.

'Where am I to put all my furniture?' cried Birotteau, 'and my books, my beautiful library, my nice pictures, my red drawing-room—all my things, in short!'

And the poor man's despair at finding himself thus uprooted was so guileless, it so perfectly showed the purity of his life, and his ignorance of the world, that Madame de Listomère and Mademoiselle Salomon said, to comfort him, and in the tone that mothers use when they promise a child a plaything—

'There, there, do not worry yourself about such silly trifles. We shall easily find you a home less cold and gloomy than Mademoiselle Gamard's house. If no lodging is to be found to suit you—well, one of us will take you as a boarder. Come, play a hit at backgammon. You can call on the Abbé Troubert to-morrow to ask his support, and you will see how well he will receive you.'

Weak-minded persons are reassured as easily as they are frightened. So poor Birotteau, dazzled by the prospect of living with Madame de Listomère, forgot the ruin, now irremediably complete, of the happiness he had so long sighed for, and so thoroughly revelled in. Still,

at night, before falling asleep, with the anguish of a man to whom a removal, and the formation of new habits, were as the end of the world, he tortured his mind to imagine where he could find as convenient a home for his library as that corridor. As he pictured his books astray, his furniture dispersed, and his home broken up, he wondered a thousand times why his first year at Mademoiselle Gamard's had been so delightful, and the second so wretched. And again and again this disaster was a bottomless pit in which his mind was lost.

The canonry no longer seemed to him a sufficient compensation for so many misfortunes; he compared his life to a stocking in which one dropped stitch leads to a ladder all the way down the web. Mademoiselle Salomon was left to him. But, losing all his old illusions, the poor priest no longer dared believe in a new friend.

In the *città dolente* of old maids there are several, especially in France, whose life is a sacrifice nobly renewed day by day to noble feeling. Some remain proudly faithful to a heart which death untimely snatched from them; martyrs to love, they learn the secret of womanliness of soul. Others succumb to a family pride which, to our shame, is daily waxing less; they have devoted themselves to make the fortune of a brother, or to the care of orphan nephews; such women are mothers though remaining maids. These old maids rise to the highest heroism of their sex, by consecrating every womanly feeling to the worship of misfortune. They idealise the concept of woman, by renouncing all the rewards of her natural destiny, and accepting only its penalties. They live enshrined in the beauty of their self-sacrifice, and men reverently bow their heads before their faded forms. Mademoiselle de Sombreuil is neither wife nor maid; she was, and always will be, an embodied poem.

Mademoiselle Salomon was one of these heroic creatures. Her sacrifice was religiously sublime, inasmuch as it would remain inglorious after having been a daily anguish. Young and handsome, she was loved; her lover lost his reason. For five years she had devoted herself with the courage of love to the mechanical joys of the unhappy man; she was so fully wedded to his madness that she did not think him mad.

She was a woman of simple manners, frank in speech, with a pale face not devoid of character, though the features were regular. She never spoke of the experiences of her life. Only, now and then, the sudden shudder with which she heard the narrative of some dreadful or melancholy incident betrayed in her the fine qualities evolved by great sorrows. She had come to live at Tours after the death of her companion in life. There she could not be appreciated at her true value; she was regarded as a 'good creature.' She was very charitable, and attached herself by preference to the weak and helpless. For this reason she had, of course, the deepest interest in the unhappy priest.

Mademoiselle Salomon de Villenoix, driving into town early next morning, took Birotteau with her, set him down on the Cathedral quay, and left him making his way towards the Close, where he was in great haste to arrive, to save the canonry, at any rate, from the shipwreck, and to superintend the removal of his furniture. He rang, not without violent palpitations, at the door of the house, whither for fourteen years he had been in the habit of coming, in which he had dwelt, and whence he was now to be for ever exiled after dreaming that he might die there in peace like his friend Chapeloud.

Marianne was surprised to see him. He told her he had come to speak to Monsieur Troubert, and turned towards the ground-floor rooms in which the Canon lodged; but Marianne called out to him—

'The Abbé Troubert is not there, Monsieur le Vicaire; he is in your old rooms.'

These words were a fearful shock to Birotteau, who at last understood Troubert's character, and the unfathomable depth of revenge so slowly worked out, when he saw him quite at home in Chapeloud's library, seated in Chapeloud's fine Gothic chair—sleeping, no doubt, in Chapeloud's bed, using Chapeloud's furniture, contravening Chapeloud's will, in short, disinheriting Chapeloud's friend;—that very Chapeloud who had for so long penned him in at Mademoiselle Gamard's, hindered his advancement, and kept him out of the drawing-rooms of Tours. By what magic wand had this transformation been effected? Were these things no longer Birotteau's?

Indeed, as he noted the sardonic expression with which Troubert looked round on this library, Birotteau inferred that the future Vicar-General was secure of possessing for ever the plunder of the two men he had so bitterly hated—Chapeloud as an enemy, and Birotteau because in him he still saw Chapeloud. At the sight a thousand ideas surged up in the worthy man's heart and wrapped him in a sort of trance. He stood motionless, and, as it were, fascinated by Troubert's eye, which was fixed on him.

'I cannot suppose, Monsieur,' said Birotteau at last, 'that you would wish to deprive me of the things that are mine. Though Mademoiselle Gamard may have been impatient to move you, she must surely be just enough to allow me time to identify my books and remove my furniture.'

'Monsieur,' said the Canon coldly, and betraying no sort of feeling in his face, 'Mademoiselle Gamard told me yesterday that you were leaving; of the cause of it I know nothing. If she moved me up here, it was because she was obliged to do so. Monsieur l'Abbé Poirel has taken my rooms. Whether the furniture in these rooms

belongs to Mademoiselle, I know not. If it is yours, you know her perfect honesty; the saintliness of her life is a guarantee for it.

'As to myself, you know how plainly I live. For fifteen years I slept in a bare room, never heeding the damp, which is killing me by inches. At the same time, if you wish to return to these rooms, I am ready to give them up to you.'

As he listened to this terrible speech, Birotteau forgot the matter of the canonry; he went downstairs as briskly as a young man to find Mademoiselle Gamard, and met her at the bottom of the stairs in the large paved passage which joined the two parts of the house.

'Mademoiselle,' said he, bowing, and not heeding the sour, sardonic smile that curled her lips, or the extraordinary fire that gave her eyes a glare like a tiger's, 'I cannot understand why you did not wait till I had removed my furniture before——'

'What!' she exclaimed, interrupting him, 'have not all your things been taken to Madame de Listomèré's?'

'But my furniture?'

'Did you never read your agreement?' cried she, in tones which ought to be expressed in musical notation to show how many shades hatred could infuse into the accentuation of every word.

And Mademoiselle Gamard seemed to swell, her eyes flashed once more, and her face beamed; her whole person thrilled with satisfaction.

The Abbé Troubert opened a window to see better to read a folio volume.

Birotteau stood as if thunderstricken.

Mademoiselle Gamard trumpeted at him, in a voice as shrill as a clarion, the following words:—

'Was it not agreed that, in the event of your leaving my house, your furniture was to become mine to indemnify me for the difference between what you paid

me for your board, and what I received from the late respectable Abbé Chapeloud? Now, as Monsieur l'Abbé Poirel has been made Canon——'

At these last words Birotteau bowed slightly as if to take leave; then he rushed out of the house. He was afraid lest, if he stayed any longer, he should faint, and so give his relentless foes a too great triumph. Walking like a drunken man, he got back to Madame de Listomère's town house, where, in a lower room, he found his linen, clothes, and papers all packed into a trunk. At the sight of those relics of his property, the unhappy priest sat down and hid his face in his hands to hide his tears from the sight of men. The Abbé Poirel was Canon! He, Birotteau, found himself homeless, bereft of fortune and furniture.

Happily, Mademoiselle Salomon happened to drive past. The doorkeeper, understanding the poor man's despair, signalled to the coachman. After a few words of explanation between the lady and the porter, the Abbé allowed himself to be led to his faithful friend, though he could only answer her in incoherent words. Mademoiselle Salomon, alarmed by the temporary derangement of a brain already so feeble, carried him at once to l'Alouette, ascribing these symptoms of mental disturbance to the effect naturally produced on him by the Abbé Poirel's promotion. She knew nothing of the hapless priest's agreement with Mademoiselle Gamard, for the excellent reason that he himself did not know its full bearing. And as it is in the nature of things that comedy is often mixed up with the most pathetic incidents, Birotteau's bewildered answers almost made Mademoiselle Salomon laugh.

'Chapeloud was right,' said he; 'he is a monster.'

'Who?' said she.

'Chapeloud. He has robbed me of everything.'

'Then you mean Poirel?'

'No, Troubert.'

At length they reached l'Alouette, where the priest's friends lavished on him such effusive kindness, that by the evening he grew calmer, and they could extract from him an account of all that had occurred that morning.

Monsieur de Bourbonne, always phlegmatic, naturally asked to see the agreement which ever since the day before had seemed to him to contain the key to the riddle. Birotteau brought the fatal document out of his pocket, and held it out to the landowner, who read it hastily, presently coming to a sentence in these terms :—

'Whereas there is a difference of eight hundred francs a year between the price paid by the late Monsieur Chapeloud and the sum for which the aforenamed Sophie Gamard agrees to lodge and board, on the terms hereinbefore stated, the said François Birotteau ; whereas the said François Birotteau fully acknowledges that it is out of his power for some years to come to pay the full price paid by Mademoiselle Gamard's boarders, and more especially by the Abbé Troubert ; and, finally, whereas the said Sophie Gamard has advanced certain sums of money, the said Birotteau hereby pledges himself to bequeath to her, as an indemnity, the furniture of which he may be possessed at the time of his decease ; or in the event of his voluntarily departing, for whatever cause or reason, and quitting the premises at present let to him, and no longer availing himself of the benefits contracted for in the agreement made by Mademoiselle Gamard hereinbefore——'

'Heaven above us! What impudence!' exclaimed Monsieur de Bourbonne. 'And what claws the said Sophie Gamard has!'

Poor Birotteau, never conceiving in his childish brain of any cause which could ever separate him from Mademoiselle Gamard, had counted on dying under her roof. He had not the least recollection of this clause, of which the terms had not even been discussed at the time when, in his eagerness to lodge with the old maid, he would

have signed all the documents she might have chosen to lay before him. His innocence was so creditable, and Mademoiselle Gamard's conduct so atrocious; there was something so deplorable in the fate of this hapless sexagenarian, and his weakness made him so pitiable, that in a first impulse of indignation Madame de Listomère exclaimed, 'I am the cause of your having signed the act that has ruined you; I ought to make up to you for the comfort you have lost.'

'But,' said Monsieur de Bourbonne, 'such proceedings constitute a fraud; there are grounds for an action——'

'Good, Birotteau shall bring an action. If he loses it at Tours, he will win it at Orleans; if he loses it at Orleans, he will win it at Paris!' cried the Baron de Listomère.

'If he means to bring an action, I should advise him first to resign his benefice in the Cathedral,' said Monsieur de Bourbonne calmly.

'We will take legal advice,' replied Madame de Listomère; 'and we will bring an action if we ought. But this business is so disgraceful for Mademoiselle Gamard, and may prove so damaging to the Abbé Troubert, that we can surely effect a compromise.'

After mature deliberation, everybody promised to assist the Abbé Birotteau in the struggle that must ensue between him and the allies of his enemies. A confident presentiment, an indescribable provincial instinct prompted every one to combine the names of Troubert and Gamard. But not a soul of those then assembled at Madame de Listomère's, excepting the 'old fox,' had any accurate notion of the importance of such a conflict.

Monsieur de Bourbonne took the poor priest into a corner.

'Of all the fourteen persons present,' said he in a low voice, 'not one will be still on your side within a fortnight. If you then want to call in help, you will perhaps find no one but myself bold enough to under-

take your defence, because I know the country, men, and things, and, better still, their interests. All your friends here, though full of good intentions, are starting on the wrong road, which you can never get out of. Listen to my advice. If you want to live in peace, give up your office in Saint-Gatien and leave Tours. Tell no one where you go, but seek a cure of souls far from hence, where Troubert can never again come across you.'

'Leave Tours!' cried the Abbé, with unspeakable dismay.

It was to him a form of death. Was it not tearing up all the roots by which he held to the world? Celibates make habits take the place of feelings. And when to this system of ideas, by which they go through life rather than live, they add a weak nature, external things have an astonishing dominion over them. Birotteau had really become a sort of vegetable; to transplant it was to endanger its guileless functions. Just as a tree, in order to live, must always find the same juices at hand, and always send its filaments into the same soil, so Birotteau must always patter round Saint-Gatien, always trot up and down the spot on the Mall where he was wont to walk, always go through the same familiar streets, and constantly frequent the three drawing-rooms where evening after evening he played whist or backgammon.

'To be sure—I was not thinking,' replied Monsieur de Bourbonne, looking compassionately at the priest.

Before long all Tours knew that Madame la Baronne de Listomère, widow of a Lieutenant-General, had given a home to the Abbé Birotteau, *Vicaire* of Saint-Gatien. This fact, on which several persons threw doubts, cut short all questions, and gave definiteness to party divisions, especially when Mademoiselle Salomon was the first to dare speak of fraud and an action at law.

Mademoiselle Gamard, with the subtle vanity and the

fanatical sense of personal importance that are characteristic of old maids, considered herself greatly aggrieved by the line of conduct taken by Madame de Listomère. The Baroness was a woman of high rank, elegant in her habits, whose good taste, polished manners, and genuine piety were beyond dispute. By sheltering Birotteau she formally gave the lie to all Mademoiselle Gamard's asseverations, indirectly censured her conduct, and seemed to sanction the Abbé's complaints of his former landlady.

For the better comprehension of this story, it is necessary here to explain how much power Mademoiselle Gamard derived from the discernment and analytical spirit with which old women can account to themselves for the actions of others, and to set forth the resources of her faction. Escorted by the always taciturn Abbé Troubert, she spent her evenings in four or five houses where a dozen persons were wont to meet, allied by common tastes and analogous circumstances. There were two or three old men, wedded to the whims and tittle-tattle of their cooks; five or six old maids, who spent their days in sifting the words and scrutinising the proceedings of their neighbours and those a little below them in the social scale; and finally, several old women wholly occupied in distilling scandal, in keeping an exact register of everybody's fortune, and a check on everybody's actions. They foretold marriages, and blamed their friends' conduct quite as harshly as their enemies'. These persons, filling in the town a position analogous to the capillary vessels of a plant, imbibed news with the thirst of a leaf for the dew, picked up the secrets of every household, discharged them and transmitted them mechanically to Monsieur Troubert, as leaves communicate to the plant the moisture they have absorbed. Thus, every evening of the week, these worthy bigots, prompted by the craving for excitement which exists in every one, struck an accurate balance of the position of the town with a sagacity worthy of the Council of

Ten, and made an armed police out of the unerring espionage to which our passions give rise. Then, as soon as they had found the secret motive of any event, their conceit led them to appropriate, severally, the wisdom of their Sanhedrim, and to give importance to their gossip in their respective circles.

This idle and busybody assembly, invisible though omniscient, speechless but for ever talking, had at that time an influence which was apparently harmless in view of its contemptibility, but which nevertheless could be terrible when it was animated by a strong motive. Now it was a very long time since any event had occurred within range of their lives to compare in general importance to each and all with the contest between Birotteau, supported by Madame de Listomère, and the Abbé Troubert with Mademoiselle Gamard. In fact, the three drawing-rooms of Madame de Listomère, Mademoiselle Merlin de la Blottière, and Mademoiselle de Villenoix, being regarded as a hostile camp by those where Mademoiselle Gamard visited, there lay behind this quarrel a strong party spirit with all its vanities. It was the struggle of the Roman Senate and people in a molehill, or a tempest in a glass of water, as Montesquieu said in speaking of the Republic of San-Marino, where public officials held their places but a day, so easy it was to seize despotic power.

But this storm in a teacup evolved as many passions in the actors as would have sufficed to direct the largest social interests. Is it not a mistake to suppose that time flies swiftly only to those whose hearts are a prey to such vast projects as trouble life and make it boil? The Abbé Troubert's hours were spent as busily, flew loaded with thoughts as anxious, and marked by despair and hopes as deep, as could the racking hours of the man of ambition, the gamester, or the lover. God alone knows the secret of the energy we put forth to win the occult triumphs we achieve over men, or things, or ourselves.

Though we do not always know whither we are going, we know full well the fatigues of the voyage. Still, if the historian may be allowed to digress from the drama he is narrating, to assume for a moment the functions of the critic—if he may invite you to glance at the lives of these old maids and of these two priests, to investigate the causes of the misfortune which vitiated their inmost core—you will perhaps find it proved to a demonstration that man must necessarily experience certain passions if he is to evolve those qualities which give nobleness to life, which expand its limits and silence the selfishness natural to all beings.

Madame de Listomère returned to town, not knowing that for five or six days past several of her friends had been obliged to dispute a rumour concerning herself, and accepted by some, though she would have laughed at it had she heard of it, which attributed her affection for her nephew to almost criminal causes.

She took the Abbé to see her lawyer, who did not think an action an easy matter. The Abbé's friends, confident in the feeling that comes of the justice of a good case, or else dilatory about proceedings which did not concern them personally, had postponed the preliminary inquiry till the day when they should return to Tours. Thus Mademoiselle Gamard's allies had been able to make the first move, and had told the story in a way unfavourable to the Abbé Birotteau. Hence the man of law, whose clients consisted exclusively of the pious folks of the town, very much astonished Madame de Listomère by urging her on no account to be mixed up in such proceedings; and he closed the interview by saying that 'he, at any rate, would not undertake the case, because, by the terms of the agreement, Mademoiselle Gamard was right in the eye of the law; that in equity, that is to say, out of the jurisdiction of the Court, Monsieur Birotteau would appear in the eyes of the Bench and of all honest folks to have fallen away

from the meek, peace-loving, and conciliatory character he had hitherto enjoyed; that Mademoiselle Gamard, regarded as a gentle person and easy to live with, had accommodated Birotteau by lending the money needed to pay the succession duties arising from Chapeloud's bequest, without demanding any receipt; that Birotteau was not of an age, nor of a nature, to sign a document without knowing what it contained and recognising its importance; and that as he had ceased to live at Mademoiselle Gamard's after only two years' residence, whereas his friend Chapeloud had been with her for twelve years, and Troubert for fifteen, it could only be in accordance with some plan best known to himself. That, consequently, the action would be generally considered as an act of ingratitude,' etc.

After seeing Birotteau to the head of the stairs, the lawyer detained Madame de Listomère a moment as he showed her out, and besought her, as she loved her peace of mind, to have nothing to do with the affair.

In the evening, however, the hapless Abbé, as miserable as a criminal in the condemned cell at Bicêtre while awaiting the result of his petition to the court of appeal, could not keep himself from telling his friends of the result of his visit to the lawyer, at the hour before the card-parties were made up, when the little circle were assembling round Madame de Listomère's fire.

'I know no lawyer in Tours, excepting the solicitor for the Liberal party, who would undertake the case, unless he meant to lose it,' exclaimed Monsieur de Bourbonne, 'and I do not advise you to embark on it.'

'Well, it is a rascally shame!' said the navy lieutenant. 'I myself will take the Abbé to see that lawyer!'

'Then go after dark,' said Monsieur de Bourbonne, interrupting him.

'Why?'

'I have just heard that the Abbé Troubert is appointed

Vicar-General in the place of him who died the day before yesterday.'

'Much I care for the Abbé Troubert!'

Unluckily, the Baron de Listomère, a man of six-and-thirty, did not see the sign made to him by Monsieur de Bourbonne warning him to weigh his words, and pointing significantly at a town councillor who was known to be a friend of Troubert's. So the officer went on—

'If Monsieur Troubert is a rogue . . .'

'Dear me,' said Monsieur de Bourbonne, 'why bring the Abbé Troubert's name into a matter with which he has no concern whatever?'

'Nay,' said the lieutenant, 'is he not in the enjoyment of the Abbé Birotteau's furniture? I remember having called on Monsieur Chapeloud and seeing two valuable pictures. Suppose they are worth ten thousand francs? Can you believe that Monsieur Birotteau ever intended to give, in return for two years' board with this Gamard woman, ten thousand francs, when the library and furniture are worth almost as much more?'

The Abbé opened his eyes very wide on hearing that he had ever owned such an enormous fortune. And the Baron went on vehemently to the end.

'By Jove! Monsieur Salmon, an expert from the Paris gallery, happens to be here on a visit to his mother-in-law. I will go to him this very evening with Monsieur l'Abbé, and beg him to value the pictures. From thence I will take him to that lawyer.'

Two days after this conversation the action had taken shape. The solicitor to the Liberal party, now Birotteau's attorney, cast some obloquy on the Abbé's case. The Opposition to the Government, and some persons known to love neither priests nor religion—two things which many people fail to distinguish—took up the matter, and the whole town was talking of it. The expert from Paris had valued the *Virgin* by le Valentin,

and the *Christ* by Lebrun, at eleven thousand francs; they were both choice examples. As to the bookcase and the Gothic furniture, the fashionable taste, daily growing in Paris, for that style of work gave them an immediate value of twelve thousand francs. In short, the expert, on examination, estimated the contents of the rooms at ten thousand crowns.

Now, it was obvious that as Birotteau had never intended to give Mademoiselle Gamard this immense sum in payment of the little money he might owe her in virtue of the stipulated indemnity, there were grounds, legally speaking, for a new contract, otherwise the old maid would be guilty of unintentional fraud. So the lawyer on Birotteau's behalf began by serving a writ on Mademoiselle Gamard, formulating the Abbé's case. This statement, though exceedingly severe, and supported by quotations from leading judgments, and confirmed by certain articles of the Code, was at the same time a masterpiece of legal logic, and so evidently condemned the old maid, that thirty or forty copies were maliciously circulated in the town by the opposite party.

A few days after this commencement of hostilities between the old maid and Birotteau, the Baron de Listomère, who, as commander of a corvette, hoped to be included in the next list of promotions, which had been expected for some time at the Navy Board, received a letter, in which a friend informed him that there was, on the contrary, some idea in the office of placing him on the Retired List. Greatly amazed by this news, he at once set out for Paris, and appeared at the Minister's next reception. This official himself seemed no less surprised, and even laughed at the fears expressed by the Baron de Listomère.

Next day, in spite of the Minister's words, the Baron inquired at the office. With an indiscretion, such as is not unfrequently committed by heads of departments for their friends, a secretary showed him a minute confirming

the fatal news, ready drawn up, but which had not yet been submitted to the Minister, in consequence of the illness of a head clerk. The Baron at once went to call on an uncle, who, being a député, could without delay meet the Minister at the Chamber, and begged him to sound his Excellency as to his views, since to him this meant the sacrifice of his whole career. He awaited the closing of the sitting in his uncle's carriage in the greatest anxiety.

Long before the end his uncle came out, and as they drove home to his house he asked the Baron—

'What the devil led you to make war against the priesthood? The Minister told me at once that you had put yourself at the head of the Liberal party at Tours. Your opinions are detestable, you do not follow the line laid down by the Government, and what not! His phrases were as confused as if he were still addressing the Chamber. So then I said to him, "Come, let us understand each other." And his Excellency ended by confessing that you were in a scrape with the Lord High Almoner. In short, by making some inquiries among my colleagues, I learnt that you had spoken with much levity of a certain Abbé Troubert who, though but a Vicar-General, is the most important personage of the province, where he represents the ecclesiastical power. I answered for you to the Minister in person.—My noble nephew, if you want to get on in the world, make no enemies in the Church.

'Now, go back to Tours, and make your peace with this devil of a Vicar-General. Remember that Vicars-General are men with whom you must always live in peace. Deuce take it! When we are all trying to re-establish the Church, to cast discredit on the priests is a blunder in a ship's lieutenant who wants his promotion. If you do not make it up with this Abbé Troubert, you need not look to me; I shall cast you off. The Minister for Church affairs spoke to me of the man just now as

certain to be a Bishop. If Troubert took an aversion for our family, he might hinder my name from appearing in the next batch of peers.—Do you understand?'

This speech explained to the navy lieutenant what Troubert's secret occupations were, when Birotteau so stupidly remarked, 'I cannot think what good he gains by sitting up all night!'

The Canon's position, in the midst of the feminine senate which so craftily kept a surveillance over the province, as well as his personal capabilities, had led to his being chosen by the Church authorities from among all the priests in the town to be the unacknowledged proconsul of Touraine. Archbishop, General, Préfet—high and low were under his occult dominion.

The Baron de Listomère had soon made up his mind.

'I have no notion,' said he to his uncle, 'of receiving another ecclesiastical broadside below the water-line.'

Three days after this diplomatic interview between the uncle and nephew, the sailor, who had suddenly returned to Tours by the mail-coach, explained to his aunt, the very evening of his arrival, all the danger that would be incurred by the Listomère family if they persisted in defending that idiot Birotteau. The Baron had caught Monsieur de Bourbonne at the moment when the old gentleman was taking up his stick and hat to leave after his rubber. The 'old fox's' intelligence was indispensable to throw a light on the reefs among which the Listomères had been entangled; he rose so early to seek his hat and stick, only to be stopped by a word in his ear—

'Wait; we want to talk.'

The young Baron's prompt return, and his air of satisfaction, though contrasting with the gravity his face assumed now and then, had vaguely hinted to Monsieur de Bourbonne of some checks the lieutenant might have received in his cruise against Gamard and Troubert.

He manifested no surprise on hearing the Baron proclaim the secret power possessed by the Vicar-General.

'I knew that,' said he.

'Well, then,' exclaimed the Baroness, 'why did you not warn us?'

'Madame,' he hastily replied, 'if you will forget that I guessed this priest's occult influence, I will forget that you know it as well as I. If we should fail to keep the secret, we might be taken for his accomplices; we should be feared and hated. Do as I do. Pretend to be a dupe; but look carefully where you set your feet. I said quite enough; you did not understand me. I could not compromise myself.'

'What must we do now?' said the Baron.

The desertion of Birotteau was not a matter of question; it was the primary condition, and so understood by this council of three.

'To effect a retreat with all the honours of war has always been the greatest achievement of the most skilful generals,' said Monsieur de Bourbonne. 'Yield to Troubert; if his hatred is less than his vanity, you will gain an ally; but if you yield too much, he will trample on your body, for, as Boileau says, "Destruction is by choice the spirit of the Church." Make as though you were quitting the service, and you will escape him, Monsieur le Baron. Dismiss Birotteau, Madame, and you will gain Gamard her lawsuit. When you meet the Abbé Troubert at the Archbishop's, ask him if he plays whist; he will answer *Yes*. Invite him to play a rubber in this drawing-room, where he longs to be admitted; he will certainly come. You are a woman; try to enlist this priest in your interest. When the Baron is a ship's Captain, his uncle a Peer of France, and Troubert a Bishop, you can make Birotteau a Canon at your leisure. Till then yield; but yield gracefully, and with a threat. Your family can give Troubert quite as much assistance as he can give you; you will meet half-way to admira-

tion. And take soundings constantly as you go, sailor!'

'Poor Birotteau!' said the Baronne.

'Oh! begin at once,' said the old man as he took leave. 'If some clever Liberal should get hold of that vacuous brain, he would get you into trouble. After all, the law would pronounce in his favour, and Troubert must be afraid of the verdict. As yet he may forgive you for having begun the action, but after a defeat he would be implacable.—I have spoken.'

He snapped his snuff-box lid, went to put on his thick shoes, and departed.

The next morning, after breakfast, the Baroness remained alone with Birotteau, and said to him, not without visible embarrassment—

'My dear Monsieur Birotteau, I am going to make a request that you will think very unjust and inconsistent; but both for your sake and for ours you must, in the first place, put an end to your action against Mademoiselle Gamard by renouncing your claims, and also quit my house.'

As he heard these words the poor priest turned pale.

'I am the innocent cause of your misfortunes,' she went on; 'and I know that but for my nephew you would never have begun the proceedings which now are working woe for you and for us. Listen to me.'

And she briefly set forth the immense scope of this affair, explaining the seriousness of its consequences. Her meditations during the night had enabled her to form an idea of what the Abbé Troubert's former life had been. Thus she could unerringly point out to Birotteau the web in which he had been involved by this skilfully-plotted vengeance, could show him the superior cleverness and power of the enemy, revealing his hatred and explaining its causes; she pictured him as crouching for twelve years to Chapeloud, and now devouring and persecuting Chapeloud in the person of his friend.

The guileless Birotteau clasped his hands as if to pray, and wept with grief at this vision of human wickedness which his innocent soul had never conceived of. Terrified, as though he were standing on the verge of an abyss, he listened to his benefactress with moist and staring eyes, but without expressing a single idea. She said in conclusion—

'I know how vile it is to desert you; but, my dear Abbé, family duties must supersede those of friendship. Bend before this storm, as I must, and I will prove my gratitude. I say nothing of your personal concerns; I undertake them; you shall be released from money difficulties for the rest of your life. By the intervention of Monsieur de Bourbonne, who will know how to save appearances, I will see that you lack nothing. My friend, give me the right to throw you over. I shall remain your friend while conforming to the requirements of the world.—Decide.'

The hapless Abbé, quite bewildered, exclaimed—

'Ah! then Chapeloud was right when he said that if Troubert could drag him out of his grave by the heels, he would do it!—He sleeps in Chapeloud's bed!'

'It is no time for lamentations,' said Madame de Listomère. 'We have no time to spare. Come——'

Birotteau was too kind-hearted not to submit in any great crisis to the impulsive self-sacrifice of the first moment. But, in any case, his life already was but one long martyrdom.

He answered with a heartbroken look at his protectress, which wrung her soul—

'I am in your hands. I am no more than a straw in the street!'

The local word he used, *bourrier*, is peculiar to Touraine, and its only literal rendering is a straw. But there are pretty little straws, yellow, shiny, and smart, the delight of children; while a *bourrier* is a dirty, colourless, miry straw, left in the gutter, driven by the wind, crushed by the foot of every passer-by.

'But, Madame,' he went on, 'I should not wish to leave the portrait of Chapeloud for the Abbé Troubert. It was done for me, and belongs to me; get that back for me, and I will give up everything else.'

'Well,' said Madame de Listomère, 'I will go to Mademoiselle Gamard.' She spoke in a tone which showed what an extraordinary effort the Baronne de Listomère was making in stooping to flatter the old maid's conceit. 'And I will try to settle everything,' she went on. 'I hardly dare hope it.—Go and see Monsieur de Bourbonne. Get him to draw up your act of renunciation in due form, and bring it to me signed and witnessed. With the help of the Archbishop, I may perhaps get the thing settled.'

Birotteau went away overpowered. Troubert had assumed in his eyes the proportions of an Egyptian pyramid. The man's hands were in Paris, and his elbows in the Close of Saint-Gatien.

'He,' said he to himself, 'to hinder Monsieur le Marquis de Listomère being made a peer of France!—And then, "With the help of the Archbishop, perhaps get the thing settled"!'

In comparison with such high interests, Birotteau felt himself a grasshopper; he was honest to himself.

The news of Birotteau's removal was all the more astounding because the reason was undiscoverable. Madame de Listomère gave out that as her nephew wished to marry and retire from the service, she needed the Abbé's room to add to her own. No one as yet had heard that Birotteau had withdrawn the action. Monsieur de Bourbonne's instructions were thus judiciously carried out.

These two pieces of news, when they should reach the ears of the Vicar-General, must certainly flatter his vanity, by showing him that, though the Listomère family would not capitulate, it would at least remain neutral, tacitly recognising the secret power of the

Church Council; and was not recognition submission? Still, the action remained *sub judice*. Was not this to yield and to threaten?

Thus the Listomères had assumed an attitude precisely similar to that of the Abbé Troubert in this contest; they stood aside, and could direct their forces.

But a serious event now occurred, and added to their difficulties, hindering the success of the means by which Monsieur de Bourbonne and the Listomères hoped to mollify the Gamard and Troubert faction. On the previous day Mademoiselle Gamard had taken a chill on coming out of the Cathedral, had gone to bed, and was reported to be seriously ill. The whole town rang with lamentations, excited by spurious commiseration. 'Mademoiselle Gamard's highly-strung sensibilities had succumbed to the scandal of this lawsuit. Though she was undoubtedly in the right, she was dying of grief. Birotteau had killed his benefactress.' This was the sum and substance of the phrases fired off through the capillary ducts of the great feminine synod, and readily repeated by the town of Tours.

Madame de Listomère suffered the humiliation of calling on the old woman without gaining anything by her visit. She very politely requested to be allowed to speak to the Vicar-General. Flattered, perhaps, at receiving a woman who had slighted him, in Chapeloud's library, by the fireplace over which the two famous pictures in dispute were hanging, Troubert kept the Baroness waiting a minute, then he consented to see her.

No courtier, no diplomate, ever threw into the discussion of private interests or national negotiations greater skill, dissimulation, and depth of purpose than the Baroness and the Abbé displayed when they found themselves face to face.

Old Bourbonne, like the sponsor, in the Middle Ages,

He rang again, a very significant [illegible]

Drawn and Etched by W. Beecher.

who armed the champion, and fortified his courage by good counsel as he entered the lists, had instructed the Baroness—

'Do not forget your part; you are a peacemaker, and not an interested party. Troubert likewise is a mediator. Weigh your words. Study the tones of the Vicar-General's voice.—If he strokes his chin, you have won him.'

Some caricaturists have amused themselves by representing the contrast that so frequently exists between what we say and what we think. In this place, to represent fully the interesting points of the duel of words that took place between the priest and the fine lady, it is necessary to disclose the thoughts they each kept concealed under apparently trivial speech.

Madame de Listomère began by expressing the regret she felt about this lawsuit of Birotteau's, and she went on to speak of her desire of seeing the affair settled to the satisfaction of both parties.

'The mischief is done, Madame,' said the Abbé. 'The admirable Mademoiselle Gamard is dying.' ('*I care no more for that stupid creature than for Prester John*,' thought he, '*but I should like to lay her death at your door, and burthen your conscience, if you are silly enough to care.*')

'On hearing of her illness,' said the Baroness, 'I desired the Abbé to sign a withdrawal, which I have brought to that saintly person.' ('*I see through you*,' thought she, '*you old rascal; but we are no longer at the mercy of your vagaries. As for you, if you accept the deed, you will have put your foot in it; it will be a confession of complicity.*')

There was a brief silence.

'Mademoiselle Gamard's temporal affairs are no concern of mine,' said the priest at length, closing the deep lids over his eagle eyes to conceal his excitement. ('*Ah, ha, you will not catch me tripping! But God be*

praised, those cursed lawyers will not fight out a case that might bespatter me! But what on earth can the Listomères want, that they are so humble?')

'Monsieur,' replied the Baronne, 'the concerns of Monsieur l'Abbé Birotteau interest me no more than those of Mademoiselle Gamard do you. But, unluckily, religion might suffer from their quarrels, and in you I see but a mediator, while I myself come forward as a peace-maker . . .' ('*We can neither of us throw dust in the other's eyes, Monsieur Troubert*,' thought she. '*Do you appreciate the epigram in that reply?*')

'Religion! Madame,' said the Vicar-General. 'Religion stands too high for man to touch it.' ('*Religion means me*,' thought he.) 'God will judge us unerringly, Madame,' he added, 'and I recognise no other tribunal.'

'Well, then, Monsieur,' replied she, 'let us try to make man's judgments agree with God's.' ('*Yes, Religion means you.*')

The Abbé Troubert changed his tone.

'Has not Monsieur your nephew just been to Paris?' ('*You heard of me there, I fancy*,' thought he; '*I can crush you—you who scorned me! You have come to surrender.*')

'Yes, Monsieur, thank you for taking so much interest in him. He is returning to Paris to-night, ordered there by the Minister, who is kindness itself to us, and does not wish him to retire from the service.' ('*No, Jesuit, you will not crush us*,' thought she; '*we understand your little game.*') A pause. 'I have not approved of his conduct in this affair,' she went on, 'but a sailor may be forgiven for not understanding the law.' ('*Come, let us be allies*,' thought she; '*we shall gain nothing by squabbling.*')

A faint smile dawned, and was lost, in the furrows of the Abbé's face.

'He has done us some service by informing us of the value of those two pictures,' said he, looking at them; 'they will be a worthy ornament to the Lady Chapel.'

('*You fired an epigram at me, Madame*,' thought he; '*there are two for you, and we are quits.*')

'If you present them to Saint-Gatien, I would beg you to allow me to offer to the Church two frames worthy of the place and of the gift.' ('*I should like to make you confess that you coveted Birotteau's property*,' thought she.)

'They do not belong to me,' said the priest, well on his guard.

'Well, here is the deed that puts an end to all dispute,' said Madame de Listomère, 'and restores them to Mademoiselle Gamard.' She laid the document on the table. ('*You see, Monsieur, how much I trust you*,' thought she.) 'It is worthy of you, Monsieur, worthy of your fine character, to reconcile two Christians, though I have ceased to take much interest in Monsieur Birotteau.'

'But he is your pensioner,' said he, interrupting her.

'No, Monsieur, he is no longer under my roof.' ('*My brother-in-law's peerage and my nephew's promotion are leading me into very mean actions*,' thought she.)

The Abbé remained unmoved, but his calm aspect was a symptom of violent agitation. Only Monsieur de Bourbonne had divined the secret of that superficial calm. The priest was triumphant.

'Why, then, did you take charge of his act of renunciation?' he asked, moved by a feeling similar to that which makes a woman fish for compliments.

'I could not help feeling some pity for him. Birotteau, whose feeble character must be well known to you, entreated me to see Mademoiselle Gamard in order to obtain from her, as the price of the surrender of——,' the Abbé frowned—'of his *rights*, as recognised by many distinguished lawyers, the portrait—' the priest looked hard at Madame de Listomère—'of Chapeloud,' she said. 'I leave it to you to judge of his claim to it . . .' ('*You would lose if you fought the case*,' thought she.)

The tone in which the Baroness uttered the words 'distinguished lawyers,' showed the priest that she knew the enemy's strength and weakness. Madame de Listomère displayed so much skill to this experienced connoisseur, that at the end of this conversation, which was carried on for some time in the same key, he went down to see Mademoiselle Gamard to bring her answer as to the proposed bargain.

Troubert soon returned.

'Madame,' said he, 'I can but repeat the poor dying woman's words, "Monsieur l'Abbé Chapeloud showed me too much kindness," said she, "for me to part from his portrait."—As for myself, if it were mine, I would not give it up to any one. I was too faithfully attached to my poor dead friend not to feel that I have a right to claim his likeness against anybody in the world.'

'Well, Monsieur, do not let us fall out over a bad picture.' ('*I care for it no more than you do*,' thought she.) 'Keep it; we will have it copied. I am proud to have brought this sad and deplorable lawsuit to an end, and I have personally gained the pleasure of making your acquaintance.—I have heard that you are a fine whist player. You will forgive a woman for being curious,' she added with a smile. 'If you will come and play occasionally at my house, you cannot doubt that you will be heartily welcomed.'

The Abbé Troubert stroked his chin. ('*He is caught; Bourbonne was right*,' thought she, '*he has his share of vanity*.')

In fact, the Vicar-General was at this moment enjoying the delicious sensation which Mirabeau found irresistible when, in the day of his power, he saw the gates of some mansion which had formerly been closed against him, opened to admit his carriage.

'Madame,' replied he, 'my occupations are too important to allow of my going into society; but for you what would not a man do?' ('*It is all over with the*

old girl; I will make up to the Listomères, and do them a good turn if they do me one,' thought he. '*It is better to have them for friends than for enemies.*')

Madame de Listomère went home, hoping that the Archbishop would complete a pacification so happily begun. But Birotteau was to gain nothing even by his renunciation. Madame de Listomère heard next day that Mademoiselle Gamard was dead. The old maid's will being opened, no one was surprised to learn that she had constituted the Abbé Troubert her universal legatee. Her property was estimated at a hundred thousand crowns. The Vicar-General sent two invitations to the service and burial to Madame de Listomère's house—one for herself, and the other for her nephew.

'We must go,' said she.

'That is just what it means!' exclaimed Monsieur de Bourbonne. 'It is a test by which Monseigneur Troubert meant to try you. Baron, you must go all the way to the grave,' he added to the navy lieutenant, who, for his sins, had not yet left Tours.

The service was held, and was marked by ecclesiastical magnificence. One person only shed tears. That was Birotteau, who, alone in a side chapel where he was not seen, believed himself guilty of this death, and prayed fervently for the soul of the departed, bitterly bewailing himself because he had not obtained her forgiveness for having wronged her.

The Abbé Troubert followed his friend's body to the grave in which she was to be laid. Standing on its brink, he delivered an address, and, thanks to his eloquence, gave monumental dignity to his picture of the narrow life led by the testatrix. The bystanders noted these words in the peroration:—

'This life, full of days devoted to God and to Religion—this life, adorned by so many beautiful actions performed in silence, so many modest and unrecognised virtues, was blighted by a sorrow which we would call

unmerited if, here, on the verge of eternity, we could forget that all our afflictions are sent us by God. This holy woman's many friends, knowing how noble was her guileless soul, foresaw that she could endure anything excepting only such detraction as would affect her whole existence. And so perhaps Providence has taken her to rest in God only to rescue her from our petty griefs. Happy are they who here on earth can live at peace with themselves, as Sophie now reposes in the realms of the blest, in her robe of innocence!'

'And when he had ended this grandiloquent discourse,' said Monsieur de Bourbonne, who reported all the details of the funeral to Madame de Listomère that evening when, the rubbers ended and the doors closed, they were left alone with the Baron, 'imagine, if you can, that Louis XI. in a priest's gown giving the holy-water sprinkler a final flourish in this style'—and Monsieur de Bourbonne took up the tongs and imitated the Abbé Troubert's movement so exactly that the Baron and his aunt could not help smiling. 'In this alone,' added the old man, 'did he betray himself. Till then his reserve had been perfect; but now, when he had packed away for ever the old maid he so utterly despised and hated, almost as much perhaps as he had detested Chapeloud, he, no doubt, found it impossible to hinder his satisfaction from betraying itself in a gesture.'

Next morning Mademoiselle Salomon came to breakfast with Madame de Listomère, and as soon as she came in she said quite sadly—

'Our poor Abbé Birotteau has just been dealt a dreadful blow which reveals the most elaborately studied hatred. He is made Curé of Saint-Symphorien.'

Saint-Symphorien is a suburb of Tours lying beyond the bridge. This bridge, one of the finest works of French architecture, is nearly two thousand feet long, and the open squares at each end are exactly alike.

'Do you understand?' she added after a pause, amazed at the coolness with which Madame de Listomère heard this news. 'The Abbé Birotteau will there be a hundred leagues from Tours, from his friends, from everything. Is it not exile, and all the more terrible because he will be torn from the town that his eyes will behold every day, while he can hardly ever come to it? He who, since his troubles, has hardly been able to walk, will be obliged to come a league to see us. At the present moment the poor man is in bed with a feverish attack. The priest's residence at Saint-Symphorien is cold and damp, and the parish is too poor to restore it. The poor old man will be buried alive in a real tomb. What a villainous plot!'

It will now, perhaps, suffice in conclusion of this story to report briefly a few subsequent events, and to sketch a last picture.

Five months later the Vicar-General was a Bishop; Madame de Listomère was dead, leaving fifteen hundred francs a year to the Abbé Birotteau. On the day when the Baroness's will was read, Monseigneur Hyacinthe, Bishop of Troyes, was about to leave Tours and take up his residence in his diocese; but he postponed his departure. Furious at having been deceived by a woman to whom he had offered a hand, while she was secretly holding out hers to the man whom he chose to regard as an enemy, Troubert again threatened to mar the Baron's career and hinder the Marquis de Listomère from receiving his peerage. In full council, at the Archbishop's palace, he uttered one of those priestly speeches, big with revenge, though smooth with honeyed mildness.

The ambitious lieutenant came to see this ruthless prelate, who dictated hard terms no doubt, for the Baron's conduct showed absolute subservience to the terrible Jesuit's will.

The new Bishop, by a deed of gift, bestowed Mademoiselle Gamard's house on the Cathedral Chapter; he gave Chapeloud's bookcase and books to the little Seminary; he dedicated the two disputed pictures to the Lady Chapel; but he kept the portrait of Chapeloud. No one could understand this almost complete surrender of all Mademoiselle Gamard's property. Monsieur de Bourbonne imagined that he secretly kept all the actual money to enable him to maintain his rank in Paris, if he should be called to sit on the Bench of Bishops in the Upper Chamber.

At last, on the very day before Monseigneur Troubert left Tours, the 'old fox' detected the last plot which these gifts had covered, a *coup de grâce* dealt by the most relentless vengeance to the most helpless of victims. The Baron de Listomère disputed Madame de Listomère's bequest to Birotteau on the ground of undue influence! Within a few days of the first steps being taken in this action, the Baron was appointed to a ship with the rank of captain; the Curé of Saint-Symphorien was, by an act of discipline, placed under an interdict. His ecclesiastical superiors condemned him by anticipation; so the assassin of the late Sophie Gamard was a rogue as well! Now, if Monseigneur Troubert had kept the old maid's property, he could hardly have secured Birotteau's disgrace.

At the moment when Monseigneur Hyacinthe, Bishop of Troyes, was passing in a post-chaise, along the quay of Saint-Symphorien, on his way to Paris, poor Birotteau had just been brought out in an armchair to sit in the sun on a terrace. The unhappy priest, stricken by his archbishop, was pale and haggard. Grief, stamped on every feature, had completely altered the face, which of old had been so blandly cheerful. Ill health had cast a dimness that simulated thought over his eyes, which had been bright once with the pleasures of good living, and devoid of any weight of ideas. This was but the

skeleton of that Birotteau who, only a year ago, vacuous but happy, had waddled across the Close. The Bishop shot a glance of contempt and pity at his victim; then he vouchsafed to forget him, and passed on.

In other times Troubert would certainly have been a Hildebrand or an Alexander VI. Nowadays the Church is no longer a political force, and does not absorb all the powers of isolated men. Hence celibacy has this crying evil, that by concentrating the powers of a man on one single passion, namely, egoism, it makes the unwedded soul mischievous or useless.

We live in a time when the fault of most governments is that they make man for society rather than society for man. A perpetual struggle is going on between the individual and the system that tries to turn him to account, while he tries to turn it to account for his own advantage; formerly, man having really more liberty, showed greater generosity for the public weal. The circle in which men move has insensibly widened; the soul that can apprehend it synthetically will never be anything but a grand exception, since, constantly, in moral as in physical force, what is gained in extent is lost in intensity. Society cannot be based on exceptions.

Originally, man was simply and solely a father; his heart beat warmly, concentrated within the radius of the family. Later on he lived for the Clan or for a small Republic; hence the grand historical heroism of Greece and Rome. Next, he became the member of a caste, or of a religion, and often was truly sublime in his devotion to its greatness; but then the field of his interests was increased by the addition of every intellectual realm. In these days his life is bound up with that of a vast fatherland; ere long his family will be the whole human race.

Will not this moral cosmopolitanism, the thing the Roman Church hopes for, be a sublime mistake? It is so natural to believe in that noble chimera—the brotherhood of men. But, alas! the human machine has not such

godlike proportions. The souls that are vast enough to wed a sentiment that is the prerogative of a great man will never be those of plain citizens, of fathers of families.

Certain physiologists opine that if the brain expands, the heart must necessarily shrink. That is a mistake. Is not what looks like egoism in the men who bear in their breast a science, a nation, or its laws, the noblest of passions? Is it not, in a way, a motherhood of the people? To bring forth new races or new ideas, must they not combine in their powerful brain the breast of the mother with the force of God? The history of an Innocent III., of a Peter the Great, of all who have guided an epoch or a nation, would at need prove to be, in the highest order of minds, the immense idea represented by Troubert in the depths of the Close of Saint-Gatien.

Saint-Firmin, *April* 1832.

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